"GOING SOME" A GREAT WESTERN SERIAL STORY BY REX BEACH

No. 1
VOL. 16

TWICE-A-MONTH

15 CENTS

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

The Popular Magazine

APRIL
MONTH-END EDITION
OUT-MAR. 25, 1910

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

WHY NOT HAVE THE BOUND VOLUMES IN YOUR LIBRARY?

Gentlemen:—Beginning with the December number, 1908, I have been a constant reader and have become so attracted by the contents of the magazine that I am going to get the bound volumes prior to where I began the magazine. I see no reason why these magazines in bound form should not make just as acceptable additions to a library as any of the books of Bret Harte, Stevenson, and other well-known authors of high-class fiction. I wish to compliment you upon the clean and wholesome tone of all the stories that have appeared since I began reading the magazine. It is refreshing, and a great relief as well, to read stories that reveal human nature, as we are apt to see it in the rough. W. E. MILLS.

Kansas City, Mo.

ONE OF THE BOYS IN THE TRENCHES.

Gentlemen:—Have read letters of commendation for the bi-monthly. Allow one of the "boys in the trenches" to add his. Very probably this is the first communication you have ever received from one who literally earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. To illustrate—this week I earned seven dollars and fifty cents—twenty-four hours' work—built a wash house for a miner and set up bank fixtures. I may be compelled to economize on my eats, drinks and smokes, but can always dig up the price of the POPULAR. Keep the bi-monthly going. CHAS. DALTON.

Hartford, Ark.

THE POPULAR OR A PILLOW!

Gentlemen:—I have read every issue of the POPULAR that has been printed, and I see that some one, in a letter to you, suggests that every reader secure a new reader. I have started scores on the POPULAR Route, and one young lady in particular meets me at the door every 10th and 25th of the month with a pillow, which I get over the head if I haven't a POPULAR. Wishing you all the success possible to the best magazine published.

Oklahoma City, Okla. GEO. B. KING.

JUST ANOTHER GIRL.

Gentlemen:—I notice that so far your "Jury" consists of only *one* girl. Well here's a second. I'll soon be on my way to the far East, and if you have ever been there you can realize what a "bit of news from home" feels like. The POPULAR is about the best "home letter" I know of. You will receive my subscription before I leave, as I am so anxious to get each new edition that depending on the uncertain newsdealers in the Orient is not to be thought of. ANOTHER GIRL.

Philadelphia, Pa.

"CLASSY."

Gentlemen:—The POPULAR is one big budget of good things, every page of its 224. I deem it the classiest of the classy. I have read a good many magazines of fiction, but always tired of them. The POPULAR is certainly different from all the others, and I have never yet been dissatisfied with a single story. It brings one more in touch with life as we really find it, both in the East and West. You have a list of authors to be proud of, and I congratulate you on your selection. It was a bold step, the undertaking of two issues a month, a step taken by no other magazine and it has been one grand success. But I don't think we would have time for a once-a-week issue. I will close by saying that in my opinion the POPULAR is the greatest fiction magazine published to-day. CHAS. W. PHILLIPS.

Roxbury, Mass.

THE POET SINGS HIS PRAISE.

I'd like to say the POP'S O. K.
The stories are immense;
The cover's neat—no chance to beat—
Too cheap at fifteen cents.

Now it comes twice—a scheme that's nice—
A month, we tell you, sir;
We think it great, appreciate,
But want it oftener.

Say once a week,—you like our cheek—
But pray do not get vexed;
Don't think us hard—our best regard—
Just hustle out the next.

CHARLES A. PERRIGO.

Auburn, N. Y.

In Next Issue **The Honorable Senator Sagebrush** A Complete Novel By Francis Lynde

MONTH-END EDITION

VOLUME XVI NUMBER 1

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

APRIL 15, 1910

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THE FIRST MAY ISSUE ON SALE APRIL 10th

A Chat With You

A FEW words about our friends the newsdealers. They have been doing a great deal to help us during the past month, and we want to ask you to help them. You will realize, if you come to think of it, that the distribution of a magazine the size of THE POPULAR, and with a circulation growing so rapidly, is a considerable problem. You know the difference between a transient and a regular trade. The newsdealer does, too. If he were dealing in dictionaries he could, if the spirit so moved him, lay in a stock large enough to do him for six months, but with magazines it is different. *You* can help the newsdealer a whole lot.

TWO weeks ago, and again, two weeks before that, a considerable number of dealers in New York and other cities sold out completely during the first two days after the issue of the magazine. They went to the news companies for more, and the news companies, after exhausting their reserve stock, came to us, but we had no more to give them. Some of the dealers succeeded in purchasing copies from other dealers at the retail price, just to oblige their customers. The dealer who sells the magazine to a customer is entitled to his profit. He fulfills an important office in the circulation of any periodical, and he ought to get the best chance possible. He's a good business man, but not always a mind-reader, so he can't tell whether or not you are going to buy a magazine from him unless you are a regular customer, or unless you order in advance. We hope that you will place your orders with the newsdealers in advance for future numbers. By doing so you will be helping the dealer, and incidentally making sure that you won't miss a magazine that you really ought to have. Just ask your newsdealer what he has to say about this. He can explain better than we can.

HERE'S a letter from Balboa, in the Canal Zone. There are a great many good Americans there at the present moment working on the biggest piece of engineering that the world has ever seen:

I want to be another to register a boost for THE POPULAR twice-a-month. Don't be a quitter. Stay with us two times a month, but better still, make it every week. I have bought and read THE POPULAR all over the world, and have paid more per copy than ninety-nine per cent. of the readers. For instance, the cost at Manila was twenty-five cents a copy; Hong Kong, thirty-five cents; Singapore, Bombay, and all African West Coast ports, thirty-five cents; Alaska, forty cents; all Central and South American cities, twenty-five cents; the Canal Zone, twenty *always*. Better give us fifty-two copies a year.

Yours,
CAPTAIN H. C. M.

No, we can't make it fifty-two copies a year. We're sorry, but twenty-four to the twelvemonth is going some for us. Just glance over the list of prices in the letter once more, and reflect that, after all, there are some compensations for those whose business or social duties keep them from the simple life in Alaska or Bombay.

HENRY C. ROWLAND, whose complete novel opens the present number of THE POPULAR, is now at work on another novel for us. Ralph D. Paine is writing one, so are Bertrand Sinclair and A. M. Chisholm. Hence, if you don't see a story by each of these writers in every number, remember that a man who is doing his best work must place a certain limit on his output; the

tales that are easiest and fastest in the writing are often most sad and tedious in the reading, and we are doing our best to avoid that kind. Speaking of Rowland, we know that you have already completed his novel, "The Moon-Dancers" in the present issue. Do you remember what we said about it two weeks ago? Do you think we said too much or too little?

YOU are well acquainted with Francis Lynde by this time. "The King of Arcadia," now selling in book form, was the first thing he wrote for this magazine. "The Fire Bringers," which appeared recently in THE POPULAR, will be brought out shortly in book form by the Scribners. It's a dollar-and-a-half book, and it appeared complete in a single issue of THE POPULAR, which retails in Alaska for forty cents and in Bombay for thirty-five. The book is well worth a dollar and a half, so that even our Alaskan readers didn't make such a bad bargain, after all.

THE Honorable Senator Sagebrush" is the name of the newest novel by Lynde. It will appear complete in the issue of the magazine out two weeks from to-day. We know what good work Lynde has done in the past, and we know that comparisons are not always safe, but still we cannot help thinking that this new story is one of the best that he has ever written. If you have traveled or lived in the West you must have noticed the great changes that have taken place in conditions and ideals in the last few years. The old generation with its chivalry, its roughness, its predatory violence, is passing away, and a younger race of men no less virile, but with different aspirations and ideals, is taking its place. There is a continual warfare between the old and the new, sometimes even between father and son. You'll feel the reality of this and breathe the atmosphere of stirring times when you meet the senator and his son. Both are strong men, but their views of life are different. We won't spoil a good story by telling part of it in advance. It represents a phase of life to-day so vividly that the reader for the time feels himself a part of it. More than this, from our point of view, it is interesting, stirring, and exhilarating from the first page to the last.

THERE is another big installment of the Rex Beach serial in the number out two weeks from to-day. We hope you liked the opening chapters. The next installment is a great deal better, and the third is better still. It's funny in places, and in other places it is grim and exciting; it is always stirring in one fashion or another. A story that makes you think is a good thing, but a story that makes you feel—like roaring with laughter or like standing up and shouting—is a great deal better.

WE don't think that we have mentioned Zane Grey as yet. He is a writer new to the pages of THE POPULAR. We have a serial of his which we will publish in later issues. In the number out in a fortnight he will have a story of professional baseball which will interest you very much, whether you are a "fan" or not. Grey played professional ball himself for some years, and since then he has been doing other interesting things, of which, perhaps, more later. Rupert Hughes will also have his first POPULAR story in the issue out in two weeks from now. It is called "The Kidnapped Monument," and you'll just have to wonder what it's about till you read it. Also in the same issue there is a splendid sea story by Morgan Robertson, a very short, amusing story by Gouverneur Morris, a detective story by Karl Decker, a story of the East Side of New York, "The Yiddish Nightingale," by Max Marcin, and another big installment of "The Hollow Needle." Besides these and others, there is the first half of a two-part story by J. Kenilworth Egerton, from whom you have not heard in some time.

ONE LONG HEARTY LAUGH

"GOING SOME"

BY REX BEACH

224 PAGES OF THE MONTH'S BEST FICTION

IN THE

FIRST MAY NUMBER OF

The Popular Magazine

HUMOR
MYSTERY
ADVENTURE
ACTION

IN THE STORIES BY

Rex Beach	Francis Lynde
Morgan Robertson	Max Marcin
Gouverneur Morris	J. K. Egerton
Rupert Hughes	Zane Grey
Maurice Leblanc	Dane Coolidge

ON SALE APRIL THE TENTH

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XVI. APRIL 15, 1910. No. 1.

The Moon-Dancers

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "The Kidnapper," "To Windward," Etc.

When you have read this story you will be ready to admit that the mantle of Stevenson has fallen on Henry C. Rowland. The character of Coral—otherwise known as Jimmy Legs—will at once suggest Doctor Jekyll. He concocts a gigantic plan for colonizing one of the small archipelagoes of the Spice Islands—a colonization scheme that is nothing more or less than the thin end of the wedge for something bigger than the old Dutch East India Company ever dreamed of.

(*A Complete Novel*)

BACK to the sea again—a blight on it—and why can't some men manage to keep the land under their feet without a few hundred fathoms of blue water between?" That's what I was thinking when the first snow flurry warned me down out of the mountains, and I turned my face to tidewater a day's ride from the railroad and the old Pacific beyond.

"What's the use?" thinks I. "Here I am, a sailor man, not a prospector; and, anyway, there's three times as much water as there is land! So here she goes south again." And I hauled in the slack of the reins, and gave old Willy-waw, my yellow cayuse, a crack over the stern with the leather sennit on the end.

Near sundown I made a little settlement on the edge of a pine woods and rounded up in front of a clean-looking, slab-sided farmhouse.

A beauty with blue eyes and bare arms opened the door, and I pulled off my hat.

"Can you tell me, miss," said I, "is there any place where a traveler can find a billet for the night?"

Her pretty lips were apart to answer when an oldish man pushed her aside. He had a fierce face with shaggy eyebrows, a high nose, and a big, iron-gray beard.

"Peace be with you, brother," says he, looking as if he had half a mind to put a bullet through me. "You seek shelter for the night?"

That northwest country is full up with religious cranks, so I wasn't surprised.

"Yes, sir," said I.

"Then I counsel you to ride on," says he. "This is a godly community and shelters only such as are known to be clean of soul."

"What's that?" I was taken all aback, for if the country is rough it sure is hospitable.

"I say," says he, "that this is a community of the elect, and receives only such as are known to be men of God."

"Indeed!" said I. "Then, you snuffle-bustin' old son of a corby crow, maybe you can put me on my course to some sinful outfit so careless as to bed down the weary stranger in a far land!"

I hoped that he'd flare up, when I'd have hove him a bit of deep-sea doctrine. Instead, he gave me a gimlet look and said:

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. There is distant five miles from here a ranch where you may find food and shelter."

"All right, matey," said I. "Then I'll beat out five miles to windward. How does she bear?"

He didn't answer, but stared at me with his shaggy old head cocked a bit to port. Suddenly, says he:

"Your words are those of one who goes down to the sea in ships."

"I'm goin' down to the sea on a yellow cayuse," said I; "and I'll be glad to get there, too."

So I started to fill away again, when the old fellow stepped out and held up his hand. Behind him stood the pretty girl, her blue eyes fastened on my face and her head pushed forward to listen. The girl's neck was like cream and her hair reminded me of the heaps of new manila the stevedores load at Zamboanga.

"Stay," says the old man. "If you are a sailor you are welcome here. Enter in peace."

If it hadn't been for the girl I'd have sent him due south in the perpendicular. But her gulf-stream eyes were full of invitation, so I slid off Willy-waw and thanked him.

"Just the same," said I, "that's the first time I ever heard of my calling standing a watch for godliness. However, you've no need to fear me; I was raised where even the sailor boys learn Scripture before they learn to swear."

"And where was that—and how may you be called?" says he.

"That was in the State o' Maine," said I, "and my name is Jasper White, and my rating first mate, with a master's papers and no billet. Two years' lay in the whaler *Martha Jennings* gone in grub and outfit. That's what comes of tryin' to dig gold out o' the ground, soft and easy, instead of earning it at your proper trade."

He nodded, then made a sign with his hand, and the young girl slipped out and took Willy-waw by the rein. She was built like a racing yacht, with lines as graceful, and tall, for her head came above my shoulder.

"'Vast there, miss!" said I. "That's not for a lady to hog the run o' my cayuse!"

I made to take him from her, but the old man held me back.

"It is meet," says he, "that the handmaiden should do her task. Enter."

So in I went, hating it, not so much because it was going to hurt an able-bodied country girl to put a pony to bed, but because I liked Willy-waw and had the habit of scraping his bilges and a bit of a "gam" when the day's work was over.

Inside, the house was bright and clean as a Jap man-o'-war, and I noticed the walls were covered with Scripture texts worked in worsteds on perforated cardboard. While waiting for the old man I got to reading some of them, and found that they were mostly off their course. That is, they weren't the true Scripture words, for there were familiar ones I'd learned at Sabbath school. I reckoned that the old man had doctored 'em to suit himself, and didn't wonder at that, having piped him off for a full-rigged A 1 at Lloyds' sea-going religious loco!

The wife came in, and I saw where daughter got her looks. She was under forty, pretty as a new whaleboat, with dimples in her cheeks, very red lips, and eyes cram full of mischief. There are lots of pretty women in that northwest country; mostly big and wholesome, and full of life and feeling. They beat the men, as human specimens, and there are lots more of them —why, I couldn't say.

"So you're a sailor, Mr. White," says she. "How did you get such a long way from the sea?"

"Well, ma'am," said I, giving her the old yarn, "when Jack gets home from a whalin' voyage he h'ists an oar across his shoulder and starts inland. When some fella' along the road stops him and says: 'Stranger, whatever is that thing you're a-totin'?' there he stops!"

She laughed and showed a double row of Sulu pearls. "It's a toss up," thinks I, "which I burn my joss in front of—mamma or little daughter!"

Pretty soon daughter comes in. Her name was Mary and her voice was pitched deep and throaty—like the whisper of a conch held against your ear, and she looked a man straight in the eyes, and not even a Jap could have told her a lie!

The dinner was good and plentiful—boiled mutton and turnips and potatoes, and sparkling cider to sluice it down. Then we sat in front of the fire, and the women drew yarns out of me, and I don't know which pair of eyes was brightest, Mary's or her mother's. The old man listened, keen, but silent, and when I began to tell them of the beauty of some of the Polynesian Islands all three seemed to haul taut, near holding their breath with interest.

"There's fairyland!" said I. "No dark, no drizzle, summer always, and fresh cool airs smack on the line! Then the folks are nice; even the whalers couldn't spoil 'em—and God knows they've tried. No need to slave down there to keep alive, and if you choose to work a little you can get rich. Why don't more folks live there? They will, some day."

I was yarning along, all set and drawing, when the old man got up and opened the door. The night was like crystal and a full moon just hauling clear of the black band of pine woods. A puff of air cut in and swirled the wood ashes on the hearth; it was sharp and fine as blue, Malay steel. The women looked excited and Mary's eyes were like those of a frightened seal, all black, the pupil hiding the blue.

Says the old man, in a churchyard voice:

"The hour is at hand."

"The hour for what?" I asked.

"For our communal worship," says he. "Once at the full of every moon we meet in the forest for the Feast of Brotherly Love. This is the night, and it is time for us to go. Come, my brother, for my heart tells me that you are destined to be one of us."

My heart was telling me nothing of the sort; then I caught Mary's eye and wasn't so sure. There was the girl to fill a man's life—ay, to fill his heart and his arms and all that the nature of him craved, could he only rest ashore and laugh at the sea lure! The blood was in her cheeks and she looked excited, while her mother began to beat down the fire as if she had some grudge against it.

The women put on their capes, and out we went into the crisp night and turned east toward the pine woods, half a mile or more across the hop fields. The moon was cut to pieces by the tree-tops, but soon it hove itself clear and shone in our faces so bright as to dazzle the eyes. As we walked along, old man Ketcham, for that was his name, began to tell me about this outfit that was too holy to house the tired stranger, for fear of contamination.

The real name of the sect was "Adapted Testamenters," though the settlers living thereabouts called them "Moon dancers." Like most of those newfangled religions, this one was hatched out by an inspired old galoot named Ezekiel Hubbard.

This man, whom his people called the "Prophet" and "the Saint" had been a professor of geology in some little fresh-water college and later turned prospector and took to rambling over the Cascades alone. He had always been a red-hot infidel and used to carry a Bible around with him so as to prove to any fool who would listen what a literary slop chest it was.

Then one night, when he was sitting on a stone in the moonlight, an angel came to him and told him that if only he would read the holy book with the proper understanding he would find the truth. Then there was a bright flash and he fell on his face unconscious. The chances are that he went to sleep

staring at the moon and pitched off his rock and lit on his head.

At any rate, when he woke up he had the understanding, so he took his Bible and began to shift the text to suit himself. In this way he rigged him up a religion that suited the place and the people.

That done, he started in to sign on converts, and this wasn't hard, as about that time one or two of the old man's claims struck it rich, and he was able to offer the members of his flock something more satisfying than faked Scripture.

He gathered together about seventy or eighty families, making an aggregate of some three hundred and fifty people, staking the most of them in land and tools and food, until they could get a start.

But taking them full and by, the flock wasn't as devout as what it might have been, and the religious side of the community was a bit shaky when there came amongst them a convert named John Coral.

Coral, after looking things over, went to the Prophet and told him he didn't want land nor implements nor money; all he asked was to be allowed to live in the midst of such a godly crew, earn his bread by the sweat of his brow as a field laborer and study the deeper meaning of the inspired interpretations of Ezekiel Hubbard.

This tickled the old man, but he took him at his word. In a year's time Coral had risen to the rank of archdeacon, overhauled the system of worship, and put it on a sort of revival basis. He was getting converts from all around, and real converts, who joined the community not for what there was in it, as Coral had stopped all that graft, but because they got locoed over the religion itself.

"It was the archdeacon," says Mr. Ketcham, "who after a period of prayer and contemplation interpreted the divine command which led to the Worship Dance and the Feast of Brotherly Love. He is himself an inspired apostle. You will see him to-night."

Of course, I didn't say anything out loud, but thinks I to myself: "This Coral person is the worm in the chestnut, all right!" I piped it down that the Prophet was probably a good, old harmless sort of booby, while Coral was pointing up to get the weather gauge of him and run the whole show.

There wasn't time to find out any more, as we had reached the pine woods. Fine great trees they were, and the ones that furnish the best spars the world over. We struck a little footpath that wound between the tall trunks where the smell of the pine balsam rose to your nostrils cool, and sharp, and sweet. The place was black as the hold of a collier, for the moon was still too low to shine through, but Ketcham never once got off his course, while I blundered in his wake, and the women trailing after me.

Fifteen minutes of this blind man's buff and there was a glimmer ahead; then out we came into a clearing, oblong in shape and about an acre in size. The black pine woods was all around and the eastern sky above the treetops was aglow, and high overhead twinkled the cold little stars. Running across the clearing, north and south, were rough-hewn benches, and at the eastern end was a sort of pulpit built of bowlders.

There were a good many people sitting on the benches, but nobody spoke nor moved. We took our places in silence, near the edge of the woods, and there we sat and watched the moon creeping slowly up through the treetops.

People kept coming and coming, in family groups, drifting in like ghosts from the black woods, and dropping silently onto the nearest benches, where they sat and stared straight ahead, not so much as passing the time of night to their neighbors.

It seemed to me that there were about twice as many women as men, and all their faces looked pale and frightened. Once, an old timber wolf howled, high up on the mountain, and a sort of shiver went across the congregation.

Thinks I: "This Hubbard, or Coral, or whoever it is that runs the show

knows his business, all right, letting these people sit here and stare at the moon until he's ready to make sail!"

The nerves of all hands were on a feather edge, and once when somebody behind me stepped on a dry stick I nearly went off my seat with a whoop.

Presently the moon hauled clear of a big pine some distance beyond the altar, and the black shadow of the tree shrank back into the forest, the silver moonlight after it. The big stone altar blazed out, pale and glistening, and at the same moment a tall, white figure seemed to glide from the darkness beyond, then mounted the pulpit and stood for a moment looking up at the sky.

"The Prophet," whispered Ketcham.

The old man was certainly imposing as he stood there, still as a marble statue, and as white, his snowy hair falling on both sides of his face to mix with his beard, while the moon, almost behind him, rimmed him all about with a sort of halo, like you see in holy pictures.

The congregation gave a rumbling moan; then the Prophet raised his hands above his head and everybody stood up to receive his blessing. His voice was strong, and deep, and solemn.

After that the service went ahead like any other prayer meeting, and the Prophet read a lot of his homemade Scripture. Some of it was sheer foolishness and some was off color, I thought, and not fit to be read before women folks, while other parts were scarcely changed at all. But there was something about the old Prophet that made you like him and feel that for all of his ideas he was a good, kind old man. Just the same, I was getting tired of him, and beginning to yawn, when there came a new figure.

The Prophet climbed down and took a seat on one of the front benches while another man in a white gown crossed the moonlit space and went up into the pulpit.

"The archdeacon," whispers Ketcham.

A sort of sigh went through the congregation, and I heard the women behind me give a gasp. By this time the moon was pretty high, but it was still behind the pulpit, so that the archdeacon's face was in the shadow. In spite of this it struck me that there was something familiar about the cut of the big, shaggy head and enormous shoulders. He was a powerful man, not so very tall, but deep and broad, so far as one could see.

Then he spoke, and his voice gave me an ugly shock and the sense of some disagreeable memory. It was round and full and vibrant as the note of an organ, with a sort of musical softness which you don't often hear in such a heavy bass. It gave you the feeling, too, of its being held in check, battened down under hatches, and you got nervous and impatient waiting to hear it roll out, full bore.

He began by quoting some of the slop-chest Scripture, but I doubt if anybody noticed what he said. It was the sound of his voice as it rose and fell, like the roar of the surf, that held the people. While he talked, he swayed his big body back and forth in a curious way, like some wild beast in a cage. Then, just as his voice died away, the old timber wolf on the mountain howled again, and you could feel the shudder that ran through the congregation.

Suddenly Coral dropped his Scripture stuff and began to exhort, gently at first, then gradually gaining strength, like a nor'easter starts in on the Banks, He was talking sense, now, and the people were listening not only to his voice but to what he said. Before he had been speaking very long he happened to compare a man without religion to a ship off soundings in a gale and her rudder carried away—and as soon as he had said ten words I knew that some time or other the archdeacon had been a sailor man. There was no doubt about it; only a sailor would have put it as he did; a landsman would have used different words.

He was gradually working his congregation into an excited state—and himself, too, for that matter, and I must say, that while I didn't hold with his methods, he was giving me shivers

down the back, and my mouth was getting dry.

Here and there in the congregation somebody would let out an excited sort of yelp, like a dog waiting for you to open the door of his yard, and many of the women were keeping up a steady moaning. My heart began to thump, for some reason or other, and when suddenly the archdeacon let out a howl, about two thirds of us echoed it.

"Freedom!" he bawls. "Freedom of heart! Freedom of soul! Freedom to worship our own God in our own way! Freedom of thought! Freedom of speech and action! Freedom to love our neighbor as ourself!"

It was all slush, of course, and I knew it. Just the same, when Coral suddenly leaped into the air and shook his fist over his head with a roar, I jumped up and sang out with the rest of the crowd.

Then, still roaring like a bull cachelot, down he came off the altar, and made a rush for the congregation, everybody hollering like mad.

"Brotherly love! Brotherly love—uh, uh! Brotherly love—uh, uh!" says he in his voice of a bosun's mate, and starts in to hugging and kissing people right and left, men, women, and children. "Bless you, dear brother—uh, uh!" says he, in a sort of sobbing, moaning voice. "Brotherly love—uh, uh, uh! Bless you, dear sister! Bless you—uh, uh!"

Right through the crowd he came, heading for us and stopping to hug and kiss folks on the way. As he came closer I noticed that he was clean shaven, with long, wavy hair, and big, handsome features. The tears were running down his cheeks, and you could see his deep chest working like a bellows under his white robe.

"Bless you, bless you all—uh, uh," says he, working up our way. I wondered if he'd have the gall to try it on me, and the muscles around my shoulders were beginning to tauten up for the shove I'd give him if he did, when here he was alongside, his big, lustrous eyes glaring at me from under the black, bushy eyebrows.

"Do mine eyes reveal to me a stranger in our midst?" says he. "Yea—even so—bless you, dear brother, stranger though you be—bless you—uh, uh!"

And so help me, here I was in his grip, and he reeking of rum, and kissing me on both cheeks. It was like being in the grip of a kadiak bear or a gorilla; I felt like a ten-year-old, and then before I could do anything about it he had sheered off and was hugging Mrs. Ketcham.

Then, all at once, I discovered that this sort of thing was going on all around, the men following the example of the archdeacon, many of them blubbing like kids. The sight disgusted me and took away all the excitement I'd felt a few moments before. It struck me, too, that the archdeacon was taking a longer trick than usual with Mrs. Ketcham, and at the same moment I saw that Mary would probably be the next on the list.

Somehow, the thought of that sweet, pretty girl in the arms of that rum-soaked brute brought me up all standing. I looked around, and there she was at my elbow, white as death, and her big eyes dark and wild.

Before I knew what I was doing my grip fell on her wrist.

"Come along out o' this!" said I, and drew her toward the edge of the trees. She gave me a frightened look and held back a little.

"Come away from that beast, Mary," said I. "If he tries that game on you I'll jolt him one in the jaw!"

She gave me a wild look, but let me lead her into the shadow of the trees. There we stopped, when Mary leaned her shoulders against a pine trunk and covered her face with her hands. I stood there watching. Somebody struck up a hymn, and in a minute all hands were singing at the top of their lungs.

I caught a glimpse of Coral charging about, looking this way and that, and guessed that he missed Mary. But he had his hands full with the rest of the crowd and was ringmaster into the bargain, and presently I heard his big voice roar above the chorus.

"The dance—oh, my brethren!" he bawls. "Let us dance and sing before the Lord, our God!"

Other voices took it up. "The dance—the dance!" they yelled, and began to form into some sort of order in the open space behind the benches, some of which they carried out of the way. Then, singing a sort of ragtime chant, they arranged themselves in two long lines, facing each other, the men on one side, the women on the other. As there were so many more women than men, the female line was a good deal longer.

Forward and back they went, forward and back three times, then every man grabbed a partner, or maybe two partners, and they did a sort of jig step, whirling around in a circle and singing at the top of their lungs the same time. Sometimes they would whirl around so fast that a woman would get dizzy and fall, and one or two seemed to have fainted.

Mary had dropped her hands to her sides and was standing by the pine tree, watching the crazy show. Presently they stopped dancing and Coral began to pray. He was too far off for us to notice what he said, especially as he spoke in a low, droning voice.

"That is the end, thank Heaven!" says Mary, giving her shoulders a shake. She looked at me. "What do you think of it all, Mr. White?"

"I'd rather not tell you," said I.

"Don't mind," says she, in a bitter voice. "I want to hear."

"Well, if these folks were Injuns or niggers or any other sort of natives it would be all right. But for white folks—and Americans——" And I stopped there.

"It's all that Coral!" Mary interrupted in a fierce little voice. "The Prophet is a dear, kind old man. But Coral has got this whole community half crazy! Do you know what they intend to do now?"

"Polygamy?" I asked. "It looks like they were heading that way, and it wouldn't surprise me any."

Mary looked down at the ground. "That may come later. But what they are planning now is a migration to some other country. The British hop law has ruined this place; there's no more market. Coral has a scheme for transporting the whole tribe to the South Sea Islands. Once he got us there I suppose he would have polygamy." She threw out her hands in a despairing way.

"So that's his scheme!" said I. "It sounds all right enough for the men—but what do the women say about it?"

"Nothing," said Mary bitterly. "These women are a pack of fools; for the most part ignorant and uneducated. They will do whatever the men decide. It's always like that where there are more women than men. You'd think that it would be the other way about, but it's not. The fewer women there are in a community, the more they have to say about how things ought to be done."

I'd never thought about it before, but she was right.

"I've run foul of this Coral critter somewhere before," I said, "and I can't for the life of me remember where or when. But the memory, whatever it is, ain't a pleasant one."

Mary gave a shudder. "The people here think he's a sort of saint," says she. "But——"

"But you don't?"

"I think he is—horrible!" says she, in hardly more than a whisper. "I am afraid of him."

"Why is that?" I asked.

Before she could answer the prayer came to an end, and the people began to gather into groups to go home. We heard Mrs. Ketcham's voice calling "Mary! Ma—ry!" and saw Ketcham and Coral walking toward where the Prophet was standing. Mary started to go, then turned to me suddenly.

"Will you do something for me?" she asked.

"Anything you like," I answered.

"Unless I'm much mistaken," says she, speaking very fast, "Coral and my father will talk to you to-night about this migration idea. That is why father asked you to stop with us when he learned that you were a seafaring man.

If you wish to do me a good turn, tell them that it is not a good plan. Tell them that it can't be done—that it wouldn't work—that it's not practical! Will you?"

She gave my arm a hard little squeeze.

"Sure I will," said I. "Then you don't fancy the idea?"

"Fancy it!" cries she. "If it is carried out, it's all up with me! Good night."

She started to leave, but I threw out my arm in front of her.

"Hold on a minute," said I. "What do you mean?"

Mary turned and looked me straight in the face.

"Coral wants to marry me," she said, then slipped past me and hurried off toward her mother.

I stood for a moment where she had left me, then walked out into the bright moonlight, and over to where Ketcham and Coral were standing, talking to the Prophet.

As I drew near, Ketcham beckoned to me.

"Here is the young mariner, Brother Coral," says he; and then to the Prophet: "Brother, this is the young mariner, Jasper White."

The old man turned and raised both hands.

"Kneel, brother," says Ketcham to me, "the Prophet will give you his blessing."

I was going to say that if it was all the same to them I'd take mine standing up, when Coral boomed out in his big voice: "Kneel, Jasper White!" and almost without knowing it I found myself on my knees and the old Prophet mumbling something over my head.

Then up I jumped, mad clear through and wondering whatever possessed me to take my orders from that faker, Coral. But before I could say anything—and to tell the truth there didn't seem very much to say, now the thing was done—Coral asked us to go to his house "to confer and refresh our mortal bodies."

Then, without waiting for an answer, he linked his arm into mine and off we started through the pine woods, the archdeacon talking pleasantly about the fineness of the night, how much pleasure it gave him to meet a man from the big outer world, all just as easy and agreeable as if he was the ordinary run of citizen coming home from his day's work.

But I didn't notice much what he said, being hot and sore at the way he had twisted me around his finger, so to speak. Thinks I: "The next time you try it on, matey, you're going to run into squally weather." So far, he'd taken me by surprise, like.

All the time I was trying my hardest to remember where I'd heard that big, purring bass voice, and seen those black-rimmed, lustrous eyes, set wide apart like the eyes of a bulldog. They bulged a little, too, and were red and congested at the rims, as I could see when he stopped in the woods to light his pipe.

Coral's house was on the edge of the forest some twenty minutes' walk from the meeting place. As we went along he began to tell me about the "Adapted Testamenters," talking like a college professor, and showing by his language that he was a well-educated man.

It was a mighty convincing line of talk he handed out, and pretty soon I began to think that there was more in the thing than there looked to be at first sight. Finally he came out flat-footed and told me that the community was no longer doing well from a business point of view, and that there was no choice but they must hunt new pastures.

He said that he had lived for a good many years in Polynesia, and that he was satisfied that a white colony planted on the right kind of an island would thrive. He had schemes for starting big plantations of rubber, and sugar, and hemp, and teosinte, and tobacco, besides a copra crop, and the development of pearling and whaling industries.

He then told me that he had the option for a concession from the Dutch government for a big island in the Molucca Sea, between Celebes and Papua;

a sort of archipelago, in fact, between five degrees south and the equator. He had once been to the island, he said, and it was a garden of paradise, with all of the features of a little continent—rivers, lakes, mountains, and fertile plains. The forests were filled with valuable timber—teak and mahogany and rosewood, or blackwood, as they call it in the East, while the sea around the shores of the island was full of fish and pearl oysters.

Coral had been there on a little trading steamer which stripped the blades off her propeller on an uncharted reef and put into the island to ship a new screw. He had been so struck with the place that it had always been in his mind to colonize it some day, if the opportunity offered, and now he said that it seemed as if Providence had sent him amongst the "Adapted Testamenters" for this purpose.

"How about fever?" I asked him.

He shrugged his big shoulders. "There is fever, no doubt, in the low lands, but the island should be healthy, on the whole. We can't hope to find perfection there, any more than here."

"And the natives? They're a pretty bad crowd, ain't they? Head hunters, and cannibals, and such?"

"They've got a bad reputation," says Coral, "which they don't deserve. Let me tell you something, Mr. White; I have traveled in many savage countries, both as a trader and later as a missionary, and it has always been my experience that the lower the type of human being the more tractable he is, if justly treated. These Spice Islanders are, as far as I could learn, much like the Papuans; a tall, strong people, hunters and fishermen, and very savage, but not necessarily bloodthirsty. There is also a fair sprinkling of Malayan and Melanesian blood. But we need have no fear of the natives; the lower they are in civilization the greater their respect for a far superior race. Just see what Rajah Brooke did with the wild men of Borneo."

There was a good deal of truth in that. Coral went on to tell me some more about his schemes, and by the time that we reached his house I was getting interested, and was beginning to think that my first impression of Coral wasn't just, and that he was, after all, a mighty big man.

The archdeacon's house was scarcely more than a two-storied log cabin, but comfortable and neat as wax. There was a fire on the hearth, and when we sat down and lighted our pipes a woman came in with a jug of what tasted like cider mixed with rum—"stone fence," as they call it in New England. As far as I could see, the "Moon Dancers" believed in being good to themselves. I began to think I might like to be one myself—and it wasn't long before I was offered the chance.

The woman went out and shut the door behind her. "My housekeeper," says Coral, in his smooth voice. "A thrifty soul, whom God will reward."

Ketcham asked me how I had been impressed by the meeting, and I told him that I thought it mighty interesting.

We talked for a while. Then says Coral:

"I have been explaining our projects to Mr. White. He is just the type of man we need; strong, experienced, full of the high vitality of youth, tempered by a cool, Yankee resourcefulness. I do not think that there need be any more delay in making him the proposition which we have already discussed?" He looked from Ketcham to the Prophet.

Ketcham nodded. "The less so," says he, "as I was rejoiced to see the spirit struggling within him at our conclave."

"For those that go down to the sea in ships shall see the wonders of the Lord on the deep waters," mumbled the old Prophet, who was nearly asleep, what with the fire and the "stone fence."

"Then, Mr. White," says Coral, looking straight at me with his bulging, chocolate-colored eyes, "I am authorized to offer you the command of the schooner which we are on the point of purchasing for the purpose of transport and tender to our new colony. The terms would be something of this sort

—pay merely nominal and sufficient only for your slight personal expenses, but you will become a shareholder in the new enterprise, your allotment to be that of what might be termed an officer. This would mean that your fortunes would depend upon the success of the scheme, as a whole. All of that can be explained later. In any case, you have nothing to lose and very possibly more to gain in the next few years than you could achieve in many years of the ordinary life of a ship's officer. If you accept, we should naturally expect you to become one of us."

I'd been sort of expecting something like this, but just the same it made me sit up. I suppose I ought to have thought first of my promise to Mary Ketcham, but to tell the truth it went clear out of my head. Coral's big chocolate eyes were fastened on mine, and as I stared back, a sort of shiver went down my spine.

There's always been a good deal of the spirit of adventure in me, as there is in all my breed, and I seemed to see the island rising blue and purple out of the flat Molucca Sea, and a schooner lying in the bight, with the praus flitting here and there, and the Sea Dyaks crouching back in the bush watching our settlers coming ashore, as the Delaware Indians watched the landing of my own forefathers years ago. It got in my blood and set my heart to hammering, and almost without thinking, I leaned toward Coral and gave the table a thump with my fist.

"I'm your man!" said I.

Coral hove his big bulk onto his feet and gave me a grip of the hand that made me squirm, thumping me on the shoulder at the same time.

"Good lad—good lad!" says he, as hearty as you might wish. "Eh, Brother Ketcham?"

"You will never regret it, my young friend," says Ketcham. "It was the hand of the Lord which guided your steps this way."

Coral prodded up the poor old Prophet, who blinked a few times and started in to bless the lot of us, but nobody knelt this time. Then, as it was late, Ketcham and I went home, I making an engagement with Coral to see him the next morning, and go into some of the details.

When we got back to the house the women had turned in, first having rigged me up a good bunk in the sitting room, there being only two bedrooms up above. Ketcham said good night and went off, and I sat down in front of the fire and began to pull off my boots.

As I was doing so, I happened to catch sight of a photograph on the mantelpiece. It was the archdeacon in his robes; and as my eyes rested on it there came over me again that sense of having met the man which I had felt so strongly that night when I first clapped eyes on him. Thinks I: "We've fallen foul somewhere, matey, and the occasion wasn't altogether a joyful one!"

This sensation got so strong that I took the picture and held it under the candle to study it. While I did so there swept over me a sort of wave of recollection that went on the next minute, leaving me more adrift than ever.

"Almost had you by the tail that time, old chum!" said I, my eyes boring into the portrait. There was something about the heavy black hair, the broad, low forehead, and the big bulging eyes set so far apart, that called up something mighty disagreeable. Just the same, most people would have said that Coral was a very handsome man. His features were big and strong, without being high, and his face showed uncommon intelligence, and a sort of rough good nature. If you can imagine a good-natured bulldog with his features humanized and softened down, that was Coral.

Thinks I: "He's got a kind of a Kanaka look." And again came that sense of familiarity. It was maddening. At last, it entered my head to do a trick that I'd heard of detectives using to identify a man from his picture. I took my pencil and lightly sketched on the portrait a full beard and mustache—and then fell back against my bunk almost breathless and with my heart going like a triphammer.

For it all came back then, as if I'd

been looking at a moving picture. I saw a stretch of island beach, the white surf spouting high like bursting snowballs, the sand all gold and silver, and the fringe of palms blown back by the rush of the trade wind. A crowd of Kanakas, some crouching in the bushes, others gathered in little knots whispering and staring at a cottage built of coral, half hidden in a grove of pandanus pines which were writhing in the gale, as if trying to wrench away from the accursed place.

As our whaleboat shot in through the surf the natives splashed in to meet us, hauled the boat high with the wash of the next wave, chattering all the time, and pointing toward the house. One man spoke a little English.

"Missi dlunk—missi dlunk," says this polyglot; and the others ducked and nodded, and some even grinned a little at the relief of having us there. But the lot of them were badly scared—and no wonder, for "Jimmy Legs," the worst man in all the islands, was in there on the spree.

Nobody ever knew much about Jimmy. Some said he was the son of a British admiral and a famous half-caste beauty. Jimmy had gone to school in Auckland, then graduated, a sky pilot, from the university at Melbourne, and was sent back into the islands to show his dark-skinned brethren the error of their ways. He did, all right—by going them some hundred better at their own games! Jimmy on the loose was a stunner at a temperance lecture, all right—and Jimmy adrift amongst the Kanakas was something to make the toughest hardshell off a whaler look like St. Anthony on a swear-off!

We found samples of his work around that bungalow, and whilst we were organizing a sort of field hospital we could hear Jimmy singing hymns inside. Sometimes he'd shift his selection to a chantey, like:

"Then it's up aloft poor Jack must go—
Heave-ho till I blow the man down.
However har'rd the wind may blow
Gimme some time till I blow the man dow-
un—n—down!"

Well, we gathered up a few of Jimmy's victims, then in we went with a rush, the eight of us, and overpowered Jimmy, with a loss of no dead and eight wounded.

Parceled snug and fine, we carried him aboard, the natives singing hymns of praise, and a day or two later Jimmy comes around and wants to pitch himself over to the sharks, but doesn't nobody interfering. He stayed in his bunk till we got to Tahiti, then off he went without a backward glance, and everybody fetched a sigh of relief.

Perhaps we should have marched him ashore in irons to answer for the way he used those natives, but there'd been no loss of life, and our skipper was one of the old-fashioned kind, that didn't believe in turning the islands into a Sabbath school. He took the whole thing as an almighty joke, Jimmy being a homemade missionary. So nobody hindered him, and that was the last I'd seen or heard of him until I drifted across his hawse this night, and he archdeacon of the "Adapted Testamenters!"

II.

So Coral was Jimmy Legs! Of course—how could a man ever forget that head and shoulders and the roar of the bull-whale voice!

I carefully rubbed out the pencil marks, doused the light, and turned into my bunk, where, although dog-tired, I lay for a while, thinking it all over.

Coral, then, was a quarter Kanaka, which no doubt went far to find him his powerful build and deep, musical voice and swarthy good looks and gift of gab; while the mind back of it all was white. The Kanaka blood accounted for his working himself into a sure-enough flurry when he turned to praying, and it softened the roughness of him, and gave him the grip of his people which sheer brutality could never have done alone.

If he'd only tried to drive by bullying, some of those lean-shanked, lantern-jawed men would have up and put a bullet through him when he got to kissing their women folks.

But it struck me all at once that, if he was Jimmy Legs, then he was Jimmy Legs reformed, and the more credit to him, for he'd been two years with the Moon Dancers, and never an outbreak. And, turning this over in my mind, I went to sleep, and never shifted an ounce of ballast till old man Ketcham came clattering into the room the next morning.

Then up I got, fresh and fine, and out to the barn to have a "gam" with Willy-waw, and think about what course I'd take with the archdeacon. But I had no chance to study it out, for just as I reached for the latch of the door out came Mary with her apron full of eggs.

She stopped short, and the color flamed into her cheeks, she not being rigged out for company. Her bright hair was pretty much adrift, and her cheeks flushed and warm from searching in the haymow. Then, her frock was all open at the throat, showing a neck like new cream; her sleeves were rolled halfway between elbow and shoulder, and dimpled like little eddies in a pan of stirred milk. Her skirt was brailed up well clear of her pretty, round ankles, held in buntlines, like.

She might have stepped out of a picture book, as she stood there, blushing, a little put out, and yet kind of tickled at being caught that way. She shot me a look out of her Gulf-Stream eyes, then dropped them to the ground.

"Fancy, you being up at this hour!" says she. "We counted on your sleeping to breakfast time. I stole out the back door, so's not to wake you up."

"I'm not used to sleeping in," said I. "Sailors don't usually get more than four hours at a stretch."

"How did you get on with the archdeacon?" she asked, and the color went out of her cheeks a little.

"All right," I answered. "He offered me a billet as sailing master on the schooner he's aiming to buy for a transport and tender to the colony."

"Did you do as you promised me that you would?" And Mary gave me a quick look.

My face must have been embarrassed; I could feel myself getting red.

"Why," I began, not knowing exactly how to explain; "you see, the fact o' the matter is——"

But Mary interrupted me. "Yes," says she, with a toss of her pretty head, "I see. The fact of the matter is that, when it came to a question of keeping your promise to a girl or getting what looked like a good job——"

"Mary——" I began.

"Kindly not to make so free with my given name, Mr. White!" says she. "You've no call to explain. It's all I had a right to expect—of a stranger!"

She gathered up her apron and started for the house, but I got across her bows.

"Please let me pass!" says she, with a little stamp.

"In just a minute," I answered; "but there's something mighty important come up, and I'd like to tell you about it before doing anything."

She hung in the wind for a minute, but curiosity won out, and she gave me the signal to forge ahead. I told her all that I had found out about Coral.

Mary listened, without a word, but she was breathing hard, and her blue eyes looked black when I got to the end. Then, after a minute's silence, says she:

"There's no doubt about this?"

"It's true as the ship's log!" said I.

"Have you told my father?"

"No. I wanted to talk it over with you first."

Mary wrinkled her smooth, white forehead. "He wouldn't believe it. Or, even if he did, it would make no difference. He would say that all of this happened before Coral's conversion! That's what any of them would say! What can we do!"

"I know what I'm going to do," said I, "and that's to go to Coral himself, and say: 'Look here, matey, I'm on to you! Now, just you sling your hook out o' here!'"

"You'd dare?" she asked, in hardly more than a whisper.

"Oh, I guess so," said I.

"When will you see him?"

"After breakfast."

Most of the color had faded out of the girl's cheeks, but her eyes were brighter than before, and there was a cut to her square little jaw that pleased me. Just at that minute old Ketcham came around the corner of the barn and looked rather surprised to see us standing there.

"Do not stand idle, daughter," said he. "There is much to be done."

Mary gathered up her apron and went off to the house, when I cut loose and told Ketcham what I knew about the archdeacon. He listened, in a sort of stony silence, breathing hard through his high nose and tugging at his beard. Now and then, his keen little eyes tried to bore holes in me, but he didn't interrupt.

When I'd spun my yarn, he stood for a moment, thinking hard. Then, says he:

"Much of what you say the archdeacon has already confided in some of us—and has received our absolution. It is true that, before his conversion by the saintly Ezekiel Hubbard, he was at times the prey of Satan, but since then, during more than two years that he has dwelt in our midst, there has been none who could lift a voice in his reproach. He is a bright and shining example of the saving grace of our religion. Brother Coral is one who has passed through the fiery furnace and come out pure gold."

That, and a lot more laid on with the same brush, was all the satisfaction I got out of Ketcham. It was just as Mary had said—and I guessed that it was just about what I might expect to get from any of that moon-struck outfit. But I had another thing to get off my chest.

"At least," said I, "you must admit that what a man has been once it's always possible for him to become again. Knowing what you do, you surely wouldn't let John Coral marry your daughter Mary!"

His sharp look went into me like a killing lance into a whale.

"Young man," says he, "who are you to question my paternal duty? But that you may know my mind in this matter, let me tell you that there is no man living to whom I would sooner give my daughter to wife than Archdeacon Coral! More than that, I am bound by my promise and that of the maiden!"

"By *her* promise!" I cried.

"Yes," says Ketcham, with a scowl. "A year ago, Brother Coral came to me, asking the hand of my daughter in marriage. My heart rejoiced to comply with his request, but the girl was, for some senseless reason, unwilling. She had often expressed the desire to go to Portland to school, and in the end she agreed that if I would consent to her spending a year in the seminary, she would marry the archdeacon on her return. She has now just returned, and the archdeacon has the right to demand the fulfillment of the promise made him."

"But, look here," said I, "you surely ain't going to hold the poor girl to her promise if she don't want to marry the man!"

Ketcham gave me a look which wasn't any too full of brotherly love.

"Jasper White," says he, "your duty to this community is to direct the course of its vessels, not the welfare of its daughters."

And with that he swung on his heel and stalked off to the house, leaving me mad and hot and feeling like a fool at the same time.

There wasn't any chance to speak to Mary alone before breakfast, but it didn't matter much, as it was plain enough to me that there was nothing to be said until I'd had it out with Coral. So, right after breakfast, I told Ketcham that I was going over to keep my appointment with the archdeacon. He gave me a hard look, as if trying to make out what was in my own mind, while poor Mary was white as a sheet. I think that she expected to see me come back on a shutter, if I came at all!

The archdeacon was sitting on his doorstep in the sun, smoking a pipe. He got up and shoved out a paw like a gorilla's; and, now that I had him

billeted, I could see that there was no doubt about his being Jimmy Legs.

We went inside, and sat down. Seen in the broad daylight, the man didn't improve a great lot in appearance. The only difference was that he looked rather more like a gorilla than a bull-dog, but for all the brutishness of him the man was not bad-looking. Seen in the daylight, his eyes were not the chocolate color they had looked to be, but a mixture of dark brown and a sort of slaty gray, and very deep and intelligent, yet with the hint of something cruel and treacherous in their depths.

An ugly trick he had was that of turning his eyes, and not his head, when he wanted to look at something to one side. As we sat down, his housekeeper opened the kitchen door, then shut it again. Coral's eyes were over there and back at me like a flash. A sort of monkey look, it was, and somehow gave me the creeps. I never saw eyes that moved so quick as Coral's; I'll bet that when he was aboard ship, lying on his back, and the vessel in a seaway, his eyes would always be on the level while his head moved under them, like a lamp set in gimbals, or the card of a spirit compass.

We were sitting on opposite sides of a heavy pine table, littered with charts and account books. Coral swept a space clear, and spread one of the charts under his thick fingers.

"Well, Mr. White," says he, "first off, let me show you where this Utopia lies."

I folded my arms, leaned both elbows on the table, and stared him straight in the eye.

"You've got your nerve with you," said I, "to go back into those islands—Jimmy Legs!"

He froze up, just as he sat, and shrunk in the process. His swarthy face went the dirty, lurid color of the sky before the squall breaks—sort of a sickly yellow, green around the edges. His heavy jaw dropped, and his lips curled back a little, showing his strong, even teeth and his tongue, thick and round, like a parrot's. A sort of a glassy look spread across his eyes, and, so help me, I could see his coarse hair bristle.

Thinks I: "There's something worse left in your wake than ever I heard of, Jimmy Legs! Murder—or worse!" For if ever a man was mortal sick with shock and fear, it was John Coral at that minute.

Then came the reaction. His heart, which had stopped for a few beats, began to pump the blood back again. His nostrils flattened, and the ripples running under his blue flannel shirt showed that the heavy muscles were coming taut again.

"Stand by for a knockdown!" says I to myself, watching him closely, but never budging an inch.

He tried to speak, but his gullet was like the whistle of an old tramp steamer when she first tries to blow—choked with condensed steam. The best he could do was a gurgle.

"Huh—huh," says he. "Who d'ye take me for, young man?"

I leaned closer toward him. Bluff is everything with that sort, and any sign of fear might have cost me my life.

"I take ye for just what you are, matey!" said I. "I take you for Jimmy Legs! Good old Jimmy Legs, that I helped to bale up one fine day when he was on the loose in his house at Paumatu. It takes more than a clean shave and a nightgown to change a mug like yours, matey-o!"

For a second, I thought he was coming straight over the table at me. I never took my eyes off his, though one of his arms was thrown out and my jaw within the swing of his fist. For all of my one hundred and eighty pounds of Yankee bone and muscle, he could have wrung the life out of me between his two hands, but something held him so that he sat there, panting and glaring.

For a moment, neither of us moved; then Coral pulled out his bandanna handkerchief, and swabbed his face, and I saw that his hand was trembling.

"Oh, my Gawd!" says he, "I—I thought I'd left all that behind!"

Somehow, I couldn't help feeling sort of sorry for him; I've felt the same way for a big sperm whale in his death agony; there seems to be such a lot to suffer!

"Maybe you have," said I.

He shot me a quick look; then made a gesture with his hand.

"The consequences—yes," says he, "but not the recollection—the remorse! Mind you, White, there's nothing behind me I've got to fear but myself! Don't make any mistake; it's not the law that I've been trying to evade, but my memories! They haunt me still! Oh, Lord, how long—how long!"

He jumped up out of his chair, and strode back and forth, twisting his big hands together, his face working and the tears pouring from his eyes.

I sat there, watching him, half-pitying, half-suspicious. Certainly, when I'd sprung his old nickname on him, he had acted more like a man in mortal terror than a man overwhelmed with remorse—but, after all, it might have been just the shock of having his black record hove up at him, and he unprepared. I couldn't remember that I'd ever heard of any actual crime being put to Jimmy Legs' account; that is, what in his days would be considered a crime in the islands. Most of his cussedness was made up of horrible orgies—sometimes he'd have a whole island on the go for days, all hands drunk and on the loose in every way you can think of; and, what made it worse, and drove the missionaries crazy, was that Jimmy pretended to be a missionary himself.

I will say that nobody ever heard of this happening except when he was drunk; but, whether it happened because Jimmy was drunk, or whether Jimmy got drunk so that it might happen, ain't for me to decide. These times he was cruel, too; for all I know he might, some time or other, have killed some native in a drunken rage, but nobody would bother about that.

After watching him for a while, I began to think that Jimmy was sure enough reformed, and that *his* trouble was a tortured conscience.

Pretty soon he stopped short, wheeled facing me, and says:

"Why have you brought this home to me, Jasper White? What is your object? Hush money? Blackmail? Because I tell you frankly that you can spread the news from the housetops if you like; you will never get a thing out of me!"

He glared at me, his lower lip between his strong teeth, and his face half-furious, half-suffering.

"Don't be a fool, Coral," said I. "Do I look like a dirty blackmailer? No, sir! The only reason I've got for springing this on you is that, knowing your record, it's against my conscience to stand by and see a lot of innocent people put themselves more or less in your power——"

He held up his hand. "Stop there, my friend," says he. "No man of this community can accuse me of deception! Before undertaking my office of archdeacon, I called together Brother Hubbard and certain others of the elders, and told them the history of my past life. For a year I was placed upon probation; and, at the end of that period, having confessed myself as convinced of sin, and believing myself possessed of the strength necessary for a complete reformation, I was duly ordained as archdeacon. Since then my life has been blameless."

And so he jawed along. No doubt he saw from my face that I thought there might be some truth in what he was telling me, for he warmed up and started in to reel off the story of his life since I had helped to deport him from Paumatu.

Coral was a good talker, and he liked the exercise. He told me how he had come to the community, bowed down with repentance and full of the ambition to begin a new life. First, he had worked in the hopfields; then, finding that he was well educated, the Prophet had given him charge of the accounts of the community.

It seems that old Hubbard had become a very rich man; some of his gold claims had made big strikes. Coral had had the entire handling of the Proph-

et's affairs, and, as he claimed, if he had wished to be dishonest he could long ago have stolen a pot of money, and arranged so that it could never have been found out.

When he had proved this to me by the account books he kept, I made up my mind that the man was sincere in wanting to live on the square.

But when he finally got down to the bottom of his colonization scheme, I suddenly realized that John Coral, alias Jimmy Legs, whatever he might have been in the past or might be in the present, was, nevertheless, a mighty big man! For, as he went ahead, explaining his scheme, it began to beat its way into my head that the plan for colonizing one small archipelago of the Spice Islands was nothing more nor less than the thin end of the wedge for something bigger than the old Dutch East India Company ever dreamed of! What Coral meant to tackle was a whole lot greater than the mere control of the trade—his idea was to start what might, in time, become a little nation.

"For the success of a venture of this sort, Mr. White," says he, "you've got to have something more than mere trade interest. You've got to have some deep-seated common interest greater than the greed of gain. What you want is a religious creed, a distinct form of worship—and the less popular this is with the world at large, the better. It's for that reason, as much as for the sake of the most rapid increase in the population of the colony, that, once securely transplanted, we intend to institute the practice of polygamy amongst our people."

"What's that!" said I. "Polygamy?"

"Yes," Coral answered. "Why not? The history of the world gives us this example for the population of new districts. We have a surplus of unmarried females. See how the Mormons flourished before the onward march of civilization made polygamy no longer advisable. In our own case, it might be the same way."

I didn't say anything, but I wondered if Mary knew of this scheme!

Pretty soon, Coral came down to details. He told me that he had the refusal, at a very low price, of an old-time British auxiliary schooner yacht. She was a three-master, barkentine rigged, about three hundred tons, stanch, and in good condition. Coral's plan was to first take out a few families, selected for their adaptability, and let them sort of prepare the way for the rest. He himself calculated to go out with the first draft and stop over one trip, to superintend the beginning of things.

"It will need about three round trips to transport them all," says he. "As soon as things are well started out there, I will leave the infant colony in charge of Brother Ketcham, and return here for the purpose of recruiting colonists. Now, Mr. White, how does it all strike you?"

"It strikes me as mighty big and fine and awful interesting," I answered. "The only thing that I gag on a little is the polygamy idea. That sort of seems like going backward, instead of ahead."

He lifted his big, bushy eyebrows, and shrugged his heavy shoulders.

"There's nothing compulsory about it," says he, "either for the men or the women. The practice is permitted, that's all."

"But suppose a man got a little tired of his wife and wanted another," I asked, "could he marry again without the consent of the first one?"

Coral looked bored. "I really haven't thought about the matter, except in a general way, White," says he. "Those details will be arranged for the best interest of everybody. Perhaps the custom may not be adopted, after all; it is just an idea."

"Excuse me, Mr. Coral," says I, "but are you a married man?"

"No," says he, "nor am I apt to be for some time yet. I've got too much else on hand to be thinking about matrimony!"

I changed the subject, and began to ask about the vessel and the supplies and all of that. Finally, Coral hove himself up onto his feet.

"I must go over to Brother Hubbard's now," says he. "Then we will consider our affair as settled. The day after to-morrow, probably, you and I will go down to Seattle and have a look at our ship. Then, if everything is all right, you can stop aboard and get things in shape for the voyage. I expect to find some mail and cablegrams waiting in Seattle, which will enable me to go right ahead with our project. We are going to be very busy people for the next six weeks, Mr. White, but we're doing, or attempting to do, a big thing, and we can't afford to overlook any details."

I said good morning, and went over to Mr. Ketcham's, where I found the old man hitching up to go to Barton, a village ten miles to the sou'west. He asked me to go along, and, having nothing else to do, I went.

It was late in the afternoon when we got home; and, having watched some ducks settling on a pond when I rode in, the evening before, I borrowed Ketcham's gun, and started out to see if I could get a brace or two. The pond was on the edge of the pine woods, quite near the road, and about a mile from Ketcham's house; and, as I got amongst the trees, and out of sight of the settlement, who should I see but Mary, walking slowly ahead of me, her eyes on the ground!

As I overhauled her, she gave a quick look over her shoulder, then turned away, as if waiting for me to go on. But that one glimpse of her pretty face showed me that it was mighty pale and troubled-looking; and, as I came alongside, I stopped, and stood there, the gun over my shoulder.

For a minute neither one of us spoke, Mary standing with her back turned and the toe of her little shoe digging into the pine needles, and I studying her, and wondering what was up. Presently, says she, in a sharp little voice:

"Well?"

"What's the matter, Miss Mary?" I asked, remembering how she had dressed me down that morning for using her given name.

"Nothing," says she. "Can't I take a little walk down the road, if I want to?"

"Sure. But can't a friend luff up and hail you without getting fetched up by a round turn, like?"

"I don't understand your sailor talk," says she, "but I do understand that you're no friend of mine, Mr. White!"

"Ho!" said I, guessing how the wind lay, "so you are put out with me because you think that Coral talked me over to his colony scheme! So that's where the line fouls!"

"After what you said this morning," Mary began, with a little, contemptuous curl to her full red lip, "I hardly expected that you'd end up by working for the man. Of course, I knew that you'd scarcely dare tell him what you knew——"

"Hold hard, there, Miss Mary," I interrupted. "Nobody—man or woman—is going to tell Jasper White that he backed water—least of all, he with his word passed! I want to state that I said all of that—and more! It was only when I found out that nothing that I could say or do would make him shift his course a single point that I agreed to command his vessel—and that I did as much on your account as any other."

She gave me a quick look. "On my account?" says she. "And what have I got to do with it, pray tell?"

"Just this. You're far too nice and sweet a girl, and, though I've known you but twenty-four hours, I've come to think too much of you to fill away and stand off, leaving you at the mercy of such a man as John Coral has been. Just now he's right enough, so far as one can see, but Jimmy Legs he was, and Jimmy Legs he may be again; and there's no worse shark in all the South Pacific than this same Jimmy Legs! So there you have it, my dear, chock up, two blocks!"

Mary gave me a frightened look, then stared at the ground, pushing a pine cone here and there with the toe of her shoe.

"You'd better not mix up in it," says she, in a hopeless voice. "What with

John Coral and my father, there's not much use in struggling!" She gave a little shudder, and caught her breath.

"You don't mean to say that you'd ever let him marry you!" I cried.

"And how am I to help myself, Mr. White," asked Mary, "once we're out in those cannibal islands, with no one to take my part? My father says I'm bound to Coral by a promise I made to marry him on my return, if father would send me to school at Portland for a year. I promised; and now father wants me to keep my promise."

"And are you going to?" I asked, feeling sort of sick.

Mary turned, and looked me straight in the face. Her eyes were flashing like the sun on blue water, and I could see her white, even little teeth pinching the blood out of her lower lip.

"No!" says she, with a stamp of her foot. "I'm going to break it! Promise or no promise, I will never marry John Coral, while I can help it! I'd rather die—and maybe I will!"

"That's the talk!" I cried. "No darn fear when you feel like that about it! When does he want you to marry him—right off?"

Mary was just going to answer when I caught sight of a dog trotting down the road. Thinking that perhaps somebody was coming, and not wanting to be interrupted, I drew her back into the trees.

"Let's walk into the woods a piece, and talk it over," said I.

She nodded, and followed me for a couple of hundred yards to a big, fallen pine. The dog, which turned out to be the Ketchams', caught us up and curled at our feet as we sat down on the tree trunk. I laid the gun on the ground to one side.

"Now," said I, "let's hear what Coral figures to do."

"This morning, after you and father had gone," began Mary, speaking in a confidential little voice, that was mighty sweet to hear, "John Coral came over to see me. For a long time he talked only about the plans for the colony; then he told me what a valuable helper he expected to find in you."

She looked at me with a little smile and her eyebrows raised, and I could feel my face getting red.

"Maybe he will and maybe he won't!" I muttered.

"You can fancy how that made me feel—after what you said," Mary went on. "It was not until Coral got up to go that he said suddenly, and rather as if he were afraid—fancy Coral being afraid of me!"

"It's losing you that he's afraid of!" I growled. "Go on."

"'Well,' he said, 'and when will you be ready to keep the promise you made a year ago, my dear, and make John Coral the happiest man in the world?'"

"Darn his gall!" I interrupted, mad and hot, for some reason.

Mary gave me a quick, curious look, and, says she: "How you talk! One would almost reckon that you had something to say about it yourself!" Then, before I could interrupt, she went on: "I told him then, out and out, that I did not love him, and was sure that I never could, and that it wasn't fair to hold a girl to a promise made when she was too young and inexperienced to know her own mind."

"What did he say to that?" I asked, pleased clear down to my garboard strakes at the spirit of her.

"He got rather dark in the face. You know, Mr. White, Coral does not get red, like other people, but a sort of purplish brown——"

"His Kanaka blood——"

She gave a little shiver. "For a moment he was silent," says she. "Then he gave me one of those sidelong looks that are so creepy, and answered: 'There's no desperate hurry, my dear. Just now we are all too busy with our plans to think much of marrying and giving in marriage. Perhaps I may be able to win your heart on the voyage out, so that you will consent to share my hearth and home in this strange new land to which we are going.'"

Mary stopped talking, and for a full minute we both sat there, as silent as two bumps on the log. But I was doing some mighty hard thinking, and so was the girl, as I could see from the

pucker in her white forehead and the worried look of her sweet, pretty face. She was leaning back, her hands clasped in front of her knees, and her bare, dimpled elbow almost brushing my sleeve; and, even with the rich smell of the pine balsam that filled the clear air, I could catch the faint scent of the late roses which were pinned against her bosom, for, unlike most country girls, Mary loved flowers; besides, like her mother, she was never without some dainty little touch to her get-up, whether it was a flower or a bright ribbon or a pretty bit of lace, like you don't often see on ranch women. They were both pretty, and they seemed to know it, and to enjoy being so.

"What do you think, Mr. White?" asks the girl, poking at the dog's furry back with her foot.

I turned and looked at her, my heart going like a ship's circulating pump. Or perhaps it was more like the luff of a sail as the ship comes in irons, being hard and irregular and so loud that I thought she must hear it in those still woods, where the only sound was a low-deep whisper high in the treetops overhead.

"Mary," said I, clean forgetting the "miss," "I'll tell you what I think—and what you might do, if so minded. But you must promise not to get mad, and to remember that it's your friend trying to advise you."

She looked at me, with her eyes opened so wide that for all of my nervousness I almost laughed.

"Goodness me!" says she. "You speak like you were preaching a funeral sermon, Mr. White!"

"This is a mighty serious matter for you," I answered, a little put out. "You think that, because Coral didn't insist, he might be going to let you off. Now I'll tell you something; he's a mighty foxy person, is John Coral. He is cute enough to know that if he tries to force you to marry him here, in a civilized country, he runs a mighty good chance of losing you altogether. He knows that, sooner than get spliced to him, you'd slip your cable some fine night and run for shelter. He's not taking any chances, John Coral ain't! What he's projecting is to get you out there in the Spice Islands, where there's no law but his own, and no one for you to turn to but your father, who sides with him—and then it's all up with Mary Ketcham."

Mary sat there without speaking, her lips parted and her breath coming in little gasps. The dog, feeling something to be wrong, got up, gave her hand a sort of sweeping lick, and whined, then fastened his brown eyes on me, as if asking me to do something about it.

Finally, says she: "I believe you're right!" And then suddenly, and wringing her strong, pretty little hands together: "But what is there to do? What is there to do?" she cries.

My heart got doing flipflaps again.

"Well," I said, trying hard to steady my voice, "there ain't an awful lot of ways across the shoal! The fact is, so far as I can see, there's only the one. That's to get married to somebody else—and do it quick!"

For a moment, she just stared at me, her mouth open like a baby's, and seeming to hold her breath. Then the surprise of it soaked into her, and she gave a shriek of laughter, and for a moment it seemed like she'd fall off the log. If it hadn't been that she looked so nice with her face all flushed and full of dimples and the sunny hair tumbling about it, I'd have been mighty put out. As it was, I sat there, half mad and half on the point of grabbing her in my arms and kissing her. Maybe she saw a little of this in my eyes, for suddenly she hushed, and sat up very straight and prim, but with a little quiver at the corner of her mouth.

"Perfectly ridiculous!" says she.

"Not altogether," said I. "Of course there's one other thing that you could do, and that's to refuse to leave this country at all. You are of age, and they couldn't compel you to go. But your father would go, just the same, and your mother with him, and that would mean that you might never see them again. Would you do that?"

"Never! Never!" she cried. "I go with my people, no matter what happens."

"Then, there you are. Now, if you go as you are, you know about what to expect. John Coral is a strong man, and there won't be any law but his out there in the Molucca Sea. On the contrary, if you were to get married here, and go out as a wife, spliced all right and proper, even John Coral would hardly dare molest you, nor would your father let him, so long as he could help it."

Mary gave me a deep sort of look. "But whoever in the world am I going to marry?" she asked.

"Now, look here," said I. "You are an uncommon pretty girl, even for this country, that's full of them as the sea is of fish. I'll bet there's more than one good lad, and he not so far off, either, who would stand on his head with joy if only you put the proposition up to him. Ain't there some one of them you'd rather choose for shipmate than this man Coral?"

She turned away her face.

"There's none that I want for a husband, Mr. White," says she; "nor am I so sure that there's any would like to marry me."

I jumped up off the log and stood in front of her.

"The more shame to them for a lumpin' lot of landlubbers!" I cried. "I can tell you of one, Mary, who'd be proud and happy to be the husband of so sweet a woman as yourself! He's standing here in front of you!" And I gave my chest a thump with my fist.

"Mind, my dear," I went on, "I'm not asking you to marry me out of pity or only to save you from John Coral, but because I've never met a girl that set my heart beating like you do. It's a poor match for you, as here I am, Jack ashore and on the beach. Only for that, I'd beg you to stop back here with me, and have nothing to do with this scheme of Coral's. But, as it is, being at the end of my scope and all of that, perhaps it would be better for us both to go. Only marry me first, for, as little as I know of you, I love you already, and the better I get to know you the better I'll love you, dear. Of that I'm sure!"

I stood there in front of her, breathing hard. Before I'd finished speaking, the tears had gushed into the girl's eyes. Once she put out her hand, as if to stop me, but I caught her wrist and pressed the little hand against my lips.

"Listen, Mary," I went on, a little quieter. "Of course, there's no reason why you should care for me, or want me for your husband. If you like, you can keep it a secret, and I'll pass you my word never to claim you until you want to come to me of your own free will. If before that you want to marry some other man, I'll get you your freedom. But, should Coral try to force you to marry him, there are your papers—and your husband, by the Almighty!"

Mary's hand was still in mine; she didn't seem to notice it, but was staring at me, with her eyes very bright and her breath coming deep and fast. As I finished speaking, she slipped down off the log, and stood facing me. She was a tall girl, and her golden head was more than flush with my shoulder. I freed her hand, but she laid it on my arm, looking up into my face.

"Jasper White," says she, in a low voice, that thrilled me clear through, "you are the best friend I ever had, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. But don't you see how dangerous such a plan would be? Coral would soon have to know—and then, if he didn't do you some harm, he'd drive you away——"

"'Vast there, Mary," I interrupted. "Jimmy Legs will do to scare Kanakas into fits, and Archdeacon Coral may give hysterics to a parcel of nervous farmers' wives and their landlubber men folks. But if a Yankee whaler ain't a match for a mixed-breed, psalm-singin' beachcomber like John Coral, it's time I quit the sea and got me a job bottle-feedin' baby lambs! I don't fear him, my dear, any more than I fear a fightin' whale. He's big, and he's black and he's cute as a Chinaman, but

there's a soft spot at the core of him, or he'd never have turned sick and gray with fright as he did when I talked to him this morning. It's not a question of John Coral, Mary; it's a question of Jasper White, and whether you want to risk tying yourself with two half-hitches to a man like me!"

Mary looked at me for a minute without answering; then her eyes got misty, and she hung her head.

"I've no fear of that," says she, in hardly more than a whisper. "A woman knows an honest man when she sees him." She looked up at me, and smiled. "So does a dog," says she, for the hound, mighty puzzled at what was going on, had raised up and put his paws on my arm, as if suggesting that we move along.

"Then you'll marry me?" I asked.

"If you really wish me to—and think it best—Jasper," says Mary, with a blush. She was going to say more, but somehow I forgot the understanding, and had her in my arms, and her lips were against mine. She put her hands on my shoulders, and pushed herself gently away.

"Oh!" says she, "I thought you weren't going—to do—that—until I'd learned to care for you!"

"Do you think that's going to take an awful long time?" I asked, and my voice must have sounded funny and anxious, for Mary burst out laughing. She drew away a little, and looked at me aslant.

"I don't know," says she, in a doubtful voice. "That depends on how you behave. If you give me any more of those big bear hugs I might get to be afraid of you—like I am of Coral."

"Holy mackerel!" said I.

"Hush!" Mary laid her finger on her lips, which were still smiling. "Now, Jasper, we must be serious and sensible. I'm not going to pretend; I liked you the moment I laid eyes on you, astride your pony at the gate. I liked you because your eyes were kind, and you looked as if you laughed a lot and were never afraid nor cared very much whether things went good or bad. Then I liked you even more when you kissed your pony on the nose and said good night to him; and—it isn't very nice for me to say so, perhaps—but I liked the way you ripped out at father about hunting up somebody who wasn't too godly to take in a tired man. That was just what I was thinking. But do you know when I liked you the most?"

"When?" I asked, for all of this was like champagne.

"At the Moon Dance, when you growled out something about smashing Coral if he tried to kiss me! I was horribly afraid, and it seemed to me as if, at last—no, Jasper—let me finish."

But there are limits to a man's endurance when he's listening to the woman he loves singing his praises—especially when the fire is making headway. Then Mary got clear again, flushed and panting and with her top hamper a bit adrift. Spun gold it was in the ruddy sunset, gleaming through the tree trunks on the edge of the woods.

"If you do that again, Jasper," says she, very severe, as soon as she could get her breath, "it's all over between us."

"I promise," said I. "Go on, sweetheart."

She gave her head a little toss. "No more compliments for you, sir," says she. "I've always heard that sailors weren't to be trusted. But what I was going to say is this: I like you, Jasper White, and if you weren't so rough and treated me with a little more respect, I might—possibly—love you, some day; it will all depend on you. So, if you wish, I'll marry you; but, for the present, nobody must know it, and—and"—her face flamed like the sun, almost under the skyline—"you must keep your word, and not claim me for your wife until these troublesome things are settled."

"Mary," said I, "you are the truest, squarest, sweetest woman that ever lived! It's going to be mighty hard to wait for you, dear, but nobody knows better than myself what wrong I'd be doing to take you now. Good land!

What have I got to offer you? A few —mighty few—dollars and a yellow cayuse! That's my fortune! A sailor man without a billet is about as much good as that gun without powder. No, my dear, we've got to wait, that's plain; but, to get the weather gauge of Coral, the sky-pilot's part of it has got to happen right off—and the question is, where and when?"

Mary gave me a look, half-shy, half-troubled.

"Day after to-morrow," said I, "Coral and I are going down to Seattle, where I'll have to stop until we sail. That leaves only to-morrow. Now, there's a sky pilot in Barton, because I saw a church; and, since it's a county seat, I can get the license there. This thing has got to be all shipshape and proper. Suppose we tell the folks to-morrow morning that we're going to cruise around a spell, then ride over to Barton and get spliced. We'll tell the preacher how it is, and get him to promise to sling his jaw tackle."

Mary hung in the wind for a little while; but, in the end, I persuaded her, and we sealed the bargain in the good old way.

Then—"Come," says Mary, jumping up. "It will be dark, directly; we must go."

I picked up the gun, and we walked slowly through the trees to the trail. There we struck a bit of luck, for just as we reached the edge of the woods there came from almost over our heads a clear: *"On-konk—on-konk—on-konk!"*

"Look!" whispers Mary, gripping my arm.

Straight toward us, and just skimming the tops of the trees, came a file of big Canada geese, heading for the pond where I had meant to look for ducks. In the fading twilight, they almost scared me, from their size! A flock of umbrellas, they looked, and the beat of their wings in the still air was like the blow of a porpoise.

But I didn't stop to study natural history. Out I jumped into the open and threw up the gun, a double-barreled muzzleloader, with two heavy charges and big shot, for I'd thought to find my ducks swimming well offshore. Overhead, the big gander saw me, and swung his yards aback, mounting the same time; the ones behind pitched almost into him, and bunched as they were I saw my chance. *Bang!* roared the old cannon, right into the flock. *Bang!* she thundered again, nigh breaking my jaw, and the air was chockablock with flopping geese.

Almighty, but it was a record slaughter! Down they came—five of them, smashing through the trees and thudding on the ground, while the feathers hung like a cloud in the still air.

"Jasper!" screamed Mary, and made a rush for the poultry adjacent. We gathered up our game and started for home.

"How pleased father will be!" Mary chattered, as I lurched along, plimsoll under with the load, for I wouldn't risk her staining her clean white frock. "He always boasted that his old gun could outshoot any breechloader in the settlement. How *did* you do it, Jasper?"

"Oh, I just made believe that those geese were Coral and his gang comin' to steal my pretty wife!" I answered, and looked at Mary, but her face was turned from me—and, anyway, it was too dark to see her blush.

III.

The middle of the next forenoon found Mary and me well on the trail to Barton. There had been no trouble about our getting off, Mrs. Ketcham wanting some errands done, cloth matched, and the like that she hadn't cared to bother her husband about.

We pushed along fast, Mary on her own pony, that was full of ginger, and I riding Willy-waw, who was frisky, too, after a couple of days' rest and a few feeds of alfalfa.

"Let's see," says Mary, turning in her saddle, and smiling. "What a lot we've got to do!" She looked down at a list which was tucked into her

belt. The ponies were picking their way slowly, for the trail was steep, just here, and rocky.

"H'm!" says Mary, looking at me out of the corners of her eyes, "I'm afraid we won't have time to get married to-day."

"Then the calico has got to wait," said I, "for this is our last chance. Coral tells me we're off for Seattle early to-morrow morning. While you're doing your shopping, I'll get the license and the preacher. The ring I've got."

"What?" she cried, opening her eyes wide.

"Yes," I answered. "I've had it for a long time. It was my mother's."

"Oh!" Mary answered, and dropped her face.

She rode on for a little while, looking at the trail under her pony's nose. I reached out and laid my hand on hers; and, as she turned toward me, I saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"This is a poor sort of wedding for you, sweetheart," said I, "but, never mind; it's going to come out all right."

We hadn't a great deal to say after that, but we traveled fast; and, almost before we knew it, had reached the county seat. There I left Mary, and went to the town clerk's to get the license. When I told him "Jasper E. White, master mariner," he looked sort of surprised; but when I told him "Mary Ketcham," he almost fell out of his chair.

"What!" says he. "Not old Hiram Ketcham's daughter, over to Steep Hollow!"

"That's the lady," said I.

"Why, darn your nerve!" says he, "I always intended to marry that girl myself, when she grew up."

"She's taller now than what you are, matey," I answered. "You don't want to slip your line when you're fast to a girl like that!"

Then I told him some of the particulars, and he was sure interested, and promised to help us all he could. So he shut up his office, and took me over to see the sky pilot, who was a mighty nice man, and just as kind and sympathetic as he could be.

"Never mind, my young friend," says he, when he found out how the wind lay. "If you have nothing more to bless yourself with than the clothes that you stand in, you are a better match for the girl than ever John Coral would be, even if he manages to make himself King of the Spice Islands. I have always distrusted the man—though perhaps it's not a Christian thing for me to say."

The clerk went and got Mary, who was waiting for me in the post office, and brought her to the minister's, and there we were married as snug and solid as the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Constitution of the United States could do the job; and, as I looked at my pretty wife, standing beside me, with her face pale, but her eyes bright, and a brave little smile on her lips, I swore that no John Coral would ever put us two asunder.

Then I kissed her, and the minister kissed her, and he'd earned the right; and the clerk kissed her, and so had he; and I presented the parson with Willy-waw, promising to send him over the next day, saying that I'd sold him, so as not to cause suspicion. Then off we went and mounted our ponies, and started back on the trail.

We were even quieter going home than coming over, and, as I looked at my bride, something rose in my throat and choked me, like. It was a sad sort of a business, all said and done. Here we were, no longer strangers, but man and wife, I loving her deep and truly, and she caring a bit for me. To-morrow I'd got to leave her, nor could I hope to claim her for my own until ready to start, homeward bound, from the Moluccas—for I'd made up my mind to take the minister's advice and not leave her behind me in the colony; no, not if I had to break with Coral and stop out there on the beach while some other brought the vessel back.

But I was hoping that by this time Coral would have found me too useful to let me go, and would make the best of it. Besides, I doubted that there'd be any one else he'd dare trust the vessel to in those waters, only half-

charted and chockablock with ugly reefs, and the tide swinging through like a mill race. I'd look to that when I came to choose my mates!

That was the last I saw of Mary for six weeks, as the next day Coral and I set out for the coast. We found the ship lying off South Seattle. She was a good, old-fashioned tub, wooden, of course, and a proper sailing vessel, with steam auxiliary.

As soon as possible we had her in dry dock, to look at her copper and overhaul the bottom of her. Everything was sound, so far as one could see; the copper was a little thin, but good for another three or four years. Her coal bunkers were very small, but the agent explained that her engines were only intended for calms and emergencies, crawling off a lee shore, riding out a gale at anchor, and for restricted waters. That suited us, as we needed all the space there was to be had.

Topsides and standing rigging were in good condition, but she needed some new sails, and there was a lot to dō below, arranging the accommodations for our passengers. Coral calculated to give the married folks small staterooms, rig up the big saloons as dormitories for the unmarried women, and billet the single men wherever the space offered.

"As for your crew, captain," says he to me, "sign on only what men you need to run the vessel. The 'general housework' will be done by the passengers themselves."

I calculated to need two mates, an engineer, and an oiler, maybe, who could run the engine if need be, a carpenter, sailmaker, and about eight hands, four of whom would have to know something about firing.

Coral went after his mail as soon as the bank was open, and came back smiling and excited, and said that everything was all right and that we could go right ahead. He had a head on him for system and executive work, Coral had, and it didn't take him long to have the work before us all plotted out smart and shipshape.

"Your work, captain," says he, "is just the ship. Get your engineer and turn him loose below. Hunt up your mates and what sailors you need, and turn 'em to—only let me have a look at every man before you take him on. I don't want any sea lawyers, or worse. Leave all the remodeling below to me, but clean up your holds and raise your false floorings clear of any possibility of bilge water, as we've got some perishable stuff to go below—corn, flour, dry goods, and the like. Besides what we need for the colony, I'm taking out a lot of trade stuff, as I count on having the bulk of the manual labor done by natives. We whites will have to take it easy until acclimated. Besides, I don't want to discourage our people by using them up at the start."

"That's a mighty good idea," said I. "Between the twenties a white man shouldn't work much with his hands—ashore, that is."

Coral nodded. "I agree with you," says he, "and for that very reason I'm thinking about taking out a dozen or so of laborers, just to help us get started. We ought not to be entirely dependent on native labor, and I want to spare our colonists as much as possible. I don't care to begin operations with a lot of sick people. You could bring this labor gang back with you. What do you think?"

"That's all right," I answered. "Where would you get them?"

"I thought we might call at Palmerston—on the north of Australia, you know, just inside Melville Island. It's not much out of our course—and I'm acquainted there!" He shot me one of his sidelong looks. "There's no use in carrying a gang across the Pacific, especially from here, where labor is so high."

"That sounds all right," said I. "We can put in there, and pick up a gang, and I can tote 'em back the second homeward trip."

Well, for the month following we were busy as bees. I engaged a couple of engineers, the chief a Scotch-Canadian, named Gordon, a mild, quiet sort of man, who seemed to know his busi-

ness and kept his mouth shut; the second was a ferrety little Londoner, who'd been running the machine on a steam schooner. He was a bit fresh, but a hard worker, and with no real harm in him.

I hadn't got my mates, up to the third week, not having found anybody that just suited me, and having no need of them right off, there not being more work than I could boss myself. Nor had I got any sailors, but was hiring lumpers by the day.

Then, one afternoon, as I was superintending the stowing of some of the trade stuff, I noticed the men around the hatch beginning to snicker and look my way. Then there came a shuffling on the deck behind me, and I swung around, and here was a sight I'll never forget.

Two scarecrows, it looked like, and mighty low in scarecrow society, at that. One was white—or, at least, he was born white—and the other a negro. The white man must have been six feet four or five, and as he stood there I don't believe he weighed a hundred and fifty pounds. It wasn't sickness; you could tell that from the keenness of his eye and the way he carried himself; it looked more like the result of hardship and hunger and a naturally skinny frame to begin with. He seemed to be a man of middle age, getting gray around the muzzle, but hard bit by exposure, and with skin like an old saddle flap. He had a great high beak and a long, pointed jaw, and his pale eyes glared out through little slits in his leathery face.

The negro was past middle age, almost of a height with the other man, and would have been as thin, but for the bigness of his bones. His wool was grizzled, his face like a piece of wrinkled tar, but his eyes had a twinkle to them; and, as I looked at him, he first grinned, then laughed outright, as if he knew how funny they both looked. The white man, on the contrary, held himself as stiff and rigid as a soldier on parade, and that made him all the funnier.

For the pair of them were like a bundle of old rags hung on a dead bush. What the white man was wearing had once been an overcoat; that much you could see, but what he wore underneath might have been anything from a carriage cover to a dress suit. Here and there he was seized together, like, with fish line, and on his feet he wore a pair of leather boots with no soles. And late in November, too!

The darky was funnier to look at, but really less ragged, being pieced out with sacking, scraps of canvas, and the seat of his pants was reënforced with linoleum. He was better off for shoes, having a pair of Siwash moccasins, the uppers of which looked like they'd been chewed by a dog. I wondered that, in a big, generous country like that, two human beings should have been allowed to go around in such a state. But the reason soon came out.

"Almighty!" said I. "And where were you when the cyclone hit you?"

"Yah, yah!" laughed the negro. "Yah, yah! Hoo! Ee-e!"

The men looking on began to snicker, but the white scarecrow drew himself up like a prime minister.

"We did not come yeah to fu'nish youall with amusement, seh," says he, and I knew him right off for a man from south of the Mason-Dixon line, "but to try fo' a billet on yo' vessel."

"Yassir. Dat so!" says the black.

"A billet!" said I. "And what kind of a billet? Helping the cook?"

"Yah, hah, hah! Dat good enuf fo' me!" laughed the darky.

The white man turned on him savagely. "Shet up, niggeh!" says he; then, to me: "I am Captain Ernest Summe'ville, seh, late commandin' the coastin' schooner *Diana Summe'ville,* named after my late lamented wife. This culled man was my fi'st hand, and no better sailor ever came out of the Chesapeake, seh."

"Yassir. Dat so—dat so!" chirps the negro.

"Shet up, niggeh!" says Summérville. Then, seeing that I was interested, he went on: "I had the misfo'tune to lose my wife two years ago,

seh. At that time, bein' lonely and hearin' of the big strike in the Klondike, I decided to try my fo'tunes in a new field, so I sold my schooner, bought me a small, Chesapeake pungie, and, with Sam, heah, and fo' other culled pe'sons, sailed out heah."

"Yassir, dat we done?" says Sam.

"What!" said I. "You sailed out here? All the way around?"

"Yes, seh," says Summerville, in a dry voice. "The Panama Canal was not yet completed!"

This time I was the one that got the laugh.

"Yah, hah, hah!" yelled Sam, and this time it was I who told him to close his trap.

"Once out heah," went on Captain Summerville, "I sold my vessel and her cargo, and, taking Sam, heah, with me, went up oveh the Chilkoot Pass and into the gold district. Unfortunately, our venture has proved unsuccessful, and heah we are back in Seattle, busted."

"Dat we is—dat we su'tinly is!" chuckled Sam.

"Shet up, niggeh!" says the captain, in a fierce voice. "Last night," he went on, "ouah licker was drugged and we awoke to find ouahselves stripped and in the fohcastle of a British ship. We gathered together these rags, and managed to get ashore. That is ouah story, seh. If it is true that you are in need of a fust and second mate, I assuah you you can do no betteh."

"No, sah—not possibly, sah," says Sam.

Somehow I took a liking to the pair right off. Not often could a man have come walking aboard that yacht and stood there, like a bundle of rags seized along a pole, and told his story under the grins of the lumpers with as much dignity as Summerville. It wasn't hard to see that, for all his funny looks, there was good blood somewhere underneath. The man came of gentlemen forefathers, all right, and as I piped him down again it struck me that if he'd had a little meat on him and a decent suit of clothes he'd not be bad-looking.

Then I liked old Sam, too. You could just see that he'd stuck to his skipper like a good dog, licking his chops at a harsh word and wagging his tail at a kind one. And the pair of them must have had insides to them to have sailed a Chesapeake oyster dredger clean around to Puget Sound.

"Well," says I, "before we talk about anything else, let's get some grub into you and then see if we can't rig you out in something better than those Irish pennants you're wearing."

"Dat's a monst'ous good idee, sah!" says Sam, grinning from ear to ear. "Spechully de ration, sah. De clo'es kin wait!"

Summerville went suddenly white, and started to say something, but I cut him short.

"Stow it, matey," said I. "If one sailor can't help another, he'd best quit the sea and go to pawnbrokin'."

I called one of the hands, gave him a dollar, and sent him across the street to the restaurant to fetch whatever they had in the chow line, Irish stew and pork chops and the like. Old Sam listened, his eyes shining like the binnacle hood.

Then I took them down to my berth, where I dug out a complete rig of my own for Summerville, knowing that he'd feel more self-respecting once out of his rags. He took the clothes and a bucket of hot water and soap, and went into one of the staterooms to shift. While he was at it, my man came back with the grub—a whole meat pie and mashed turnips and potatoes and a pot of coffee.

"Turn to, Sam," said I, for there was a look in the negro's face that told me I had to do with a starving man. For a minute, his hunger all but got away with him; then, says he:

"T'ank you, sah, but I reck'n I wait fo' de cappen, sah." He gave another of his quarter-to-three grins. "Hopes 'e ain't ve'y long, sah—kase dis nigger mos' passhunately fond ob tu'nips, sah. Yah, hah, hah!"

Thinks I: "There's no use talking, I've just got to have Sam. He'll keep me cheered up the whole time!"

Pretty soon Summerville came in, looking even better than I could have hoped. My clothes covered him all but the shins, and a pair of gaiters fixed that. Then I left them, and went back to work; and, when they came on deck half an hour later, I swear they'd gained five or six pounds each! I sent Sam over to the store on the quay to fit out; and, when he came back, all shipshape and proper, it was knocking-off time, so we sat down on the hatch to talk things over.

"Now, captain," said I, "you are a navigator, of course?"

He got a little red. "I'm 'shamed to say that I never was much at takin' sights, seh," says he. "Fo' us coastin' people, the lead and compass are mo' than a-plenty. Comin' out, I did make shift to get latitude; but, to tell the truth, seh, Ernest Summerville ain't no expe't with the hog yoke!"

"So much the better," said I, thinking out loud.

"Beg pahdon?" says he.

"Oh, nothing," I answered, and then went ahead and told him all about our scheme and Coral—not saying anything about his past record, of course—and the "Adapted Testamenters." When I'd finished, he rubbed his pointed, stubbly chin.

"If I take you on as mate," said I, "you mustn't say anything about not being able to take sights, or Coral might balk. On the way out, I can teach you how to work out simple reckonings."

"Thank you, seh," says he. "The difficulty now presentin' itse'f is that of religious conviction. Jes' befo' leavin' home, I became a membeh of the Sanctified Band, a small sect havin' its o'igin oveh to Chincoteague, on the Easte'n Sho'."

"An' I'se a Ha'd Shell Baptis', sah," says Sam.

"Oh, well," said I, "nobody's going to have the time to bother about converting you, yet a while. I'll rate you first officer, Mr. Summerville, at seventy-five a month; and Sam, here, second officer, at fifty, on your recommendation that he can fill the billet."

"Dat I kin, sah—dat I kin!" says Sam. "Fac' is, cappen, I was onct skippeh of a free-mahsteh myself. Yassir, I done tote hawgs 'n cordwood down de Riveh Jeems to No'folk. De las' v'y'ge I done got dismasted off Newpo't News, 'count od de cook—triflin' niggeh dat 'e was, choppin' splinters off de foot ob de fo'mast, hit bein' light-'ood an' quicker ter ketch in de stove——"

"Shet up, niggeh!" says Summerville. "Y'all jaw too much!"

That's how I got my two mates, and mighty lucky I was; as, only for them, things would have turned out mighty different for Jasper White. When I told Coral about what I'd done, he puckered up his face and scratched his head, and had some kicks coming about the negro; but when he came to look over my new officers, he seemed well pleased enough, and let all objections drop.

By this time, the news of our scheme was well abroad, the press being mighty interested and spending a lot of time in arguing about whether the undertaking could be a success or not. Coral was forever being interviewed, and, what was worse, bothered to death by every beachcomber and busted Klondiker that struck town. All hands wanted to be Moon Dancers—with free board and lodging and a spice orchard or coffee plantation. But Coral would have none of them.

"These bums are no good to us," says he. "What I want are solid, respectable, married people, with children who will grow up in the country and understand it. Vagabonds like these would do us more harm than good!"

In time we were all ready, the treaty all signed and approved, and the ship waiting for the pilgrims. We were only taking out eight families, but the whole community came down in a special train, and Coral met them at the station with a brass band, and they marched across the city, singing hymns.

This sounds sort of ridiculous, but as a matter of fact it was plumb solemn to see men, women, and children

singing away, with the tears streaming down their cheeks, and the wagons piled high with duffle trailing along astern.

Coral halted his procession in Pioneer Square, and held a sort of prayer service, nigh onto the whole town lending a hand, and the brass band playing the hymns.

The townsfolk all turned out, just to look on; but quite a lot of good, respectable people caught the fever, and got converted then and there. Coral could certainly handle the crowd, when it came to religious tactics; and, being himself a regular ordained preacher, nobody could accuse him of being a faker. Nobody would, anyway; he was too convincing.

Before he got through, and had the pilgrims down to the quay, the townspeople were fetching them presents of everything they could lay their hands to, from a package of butter-scotch to a parlor organ; and the decks looked like Christmas morning struck adrift.

Naturally, all I had any eyes for was my pretty wife, who was sweeter than ever in the excitement going on about her; but I was too full of business for more than a word and a squeeze of her little hand.

What with getting their dunnage stowed and sorted and keeping the kids out of the rigging, and their mothers from sitting in the hatches or getting foul of whips and vangs, and fighting off the wharf rats, skirmishing around to steal what they could in the shuffle, I had my hands full.

Then some gray-bearded galoot started a praise service on the forecastle, and I missed my mates; and here was Summerville, offering up a prayer, and Sam down on his knees blubbing "Amens" until Ernest turns on him with a "Dem' yo' soul, niggeh, shet up!"

At last we got things shipshape and turned the engines over for half an hour, then warped clear, and with every scrap of bunting in the breeze, gave three long blasts on the whistle, and started slowly ahead on our voyage of nearly nine thousand miles.

At the last moment, Coral had decided to bring the old Prophet with us, as he said, for his spiritual support to the infant colony; but no doubt the fear that somebody else might get the control of his income had something to do with it. We were a full ship, but not uncomfortable; and, having reason to count on good weather at that season, there seemed nothing to prevent a nice voyage.

In this we weren't disappointed. The *Moonlight* proved a smart sailer, and we had a fair current practically all of the way, first the California, then the North Equatorial currents. We kept steam on her most of the run to Honolulu, where we lay a week; and, when we put to sea, every available cubic inch aboard was chockablock with the best coal to be had. There was even a heavy deckload of it in bags, but this was soon used up.

Nothing much happened on the voyage out. Everything about the ship ran nice and smooth. I had a pretty useless bunch of scrubs for crew, good sailors being impossible to get in a place where wages were high, like Seattle; but they managed to pass coal and stand watches, and there wasn't much else for them to do.

Altogether, the voyage would have been pleasant enough if it hadn't been for the sight of Coral hanging so constant about Mary. It was plain enough that he wasn't getting to windward, and was mighty sore about it; but, fortunately, we were so many aboard that he didn't get a chance to get her off alone.

The same thing held true for me, though we did manage to sneak one or two little talks at night, over behind a whaleboat, with old Sam mounting guard. Just the same, it was mighty nervous and trying, what with the knowledge that we were man and wife, not only belonging to each other by law and in the sight of God, but in our hearts as well, for by this time Mary asked nothing better than to be my mate. I made up my mind that, after leaving Palmerston, there was going to be a showdown.

We called at the Gilberts for fruit and water, then again at the Solomons, then on to Palmerston, making the voyage in thirty-four days, actual sailing time. Here we coaled again, and the day we were due to sail, Coral fetches off his labor gang.

Summerville and I were standing near the rail at the head of the accommodation ladder when Coral and his dozen beauties came alongside. We were all ready for sea, and just waiting for Coral's orders to start—the plan being to make the rest of the voyage under steam, as it was only about seven hundred miles, and bad, treacherous navigation, with reefs and strong tides, and the charts none too certain.

One glance at the crowd mustered by Coral showed them to be about as hard a looking gang as Australia could produce—and that's saying a lot! You could tell, too, from the way they were talking and going on, that there'd been a good bit of liquor flowing.

"That's a nice-lookin' flock of wallabys!" said I to Summerville. "I wonder Coral would put up with them!"

The huskies came swarming up the ladder, and I liked them even less at close range. As they came over the side, they fetched up for a minute, to have a look around and make a few remarks.

"There's you lads' part of the ship, up forward!" said I. "Now, get up there where you belong!"

They turned to look me over, and one of them said something to his mates, who laughed. I gave my head a jerk, and they started, but none too smartly, dragging their feet and making a lot of noise.

"Keep that bunch from straying aft," said I to Summerville; and he nodded as he went away forward to get his anchor.

Coral told me to get under way, and a few minutes later we were steaming slowly out to sea. I happened to be standing aft by the wheel, when I saw one of the Palmerston gang come rolling aft. Summerville, who was in the waist, getting the boats swung in, caught sight of him at the same moment.

"Wheah youall goin'?" says he, stepping in front of the man.

"'Oo in hell 'r' you?" says the other, shoving out his jaw.

"I'm the mate, seh—Mr. Ernest Summerville."

"Well, then, Ernest, me lad, git out from under me bows, and ye won't git hurt. Savvy?" And he made as if to push past Summerville.

But the mate held his ground; and the laborer, a short, but powerfully built man, cocked his head, like as if to look aloft.

"Hey, Bill!" he called to one of his chums, who was looking on with a grin, "give us a hand to shift this here stick o' Georgia pine!"

That was too much for Summerville's quick temper. For all his being such a beanpole, he was tough as hickory, and the next minute he had the man by the scruff of the neck, grabbing him so quick that the other had no time to strike; and, swinging him clean off his feet, he flung him forward as you'd heave a sack of coal.

The fellow landed in a heap, but the next minute he was on his feet, and made a rush for Summerville. The mate's long arm, with a big, knotty fist on the end of it, met him full in the face, and down he went again.

At this his chum decides to take a hand in the game, the two of them coming at Summerville together; and I was starting forward myself when, from behind the whaleboat, comes old Sam, jumps in between the two larrikins, and, grabbing a man's neck in each of his great gorilla's paws, he fetches their heads together with a crack you could hear the length of the ship. Down they dropped, and where they lit there they stopped, with no more than a quiver, like, to the legs of them.

The rest of the outfit had seen the row, and a sort of growl went up from them, and they came scrambling aft. Thinks I: "Here's a good shindy going." And I jumped for the fife rail after a pin. But, just as I'd wrenched

it out, up comes Coral through the amidships companion and heaves his big bulk in between.

"What's all this?" says he, with a scowl; and somehow it struck me that the pitch of his voice was different from usual, while his face was black and purple looking, like I'd seen it the day I told him that I knew who he was. "What's this, captain?" says he, turning to me, and I got a strong smell of rum.

"These larries are tryin' to take charge already," said I, "and they've run up against the wrong parties. That's all."

One of the men on deck sat up and began to rub his head. The other was sleeping like a baby.

Coral's face got blacker; his bulging eyes rolled toward the workmen, gathered in a knot by the foremast, then shifted to where Summerville and myself and Sam were standing, I armed with the belaying pin, and the three of us asking nothing better than to establish discipline. Coral's rolling eyes slanted from us to the pilgrims, the women white and scared, and the men looking on, ominous and quiet. They didn't like the labor gang any better than did I; and, if there'd been a ruction, our sailors would have lent a hand too. They were a mixed, scrub lot, but good enough, as sailors go, these days, and in good discipline.

Coral's scowl got deeper.

"Who did that?" says he, pointing to the men on the deck.

"I did, seh!" says Summerville, his thin mouth tight and his big nostrils opening and shutting like an old war horse.

"I he'ped, sah—dat I done!" says Sam, with a grin.

"You did, hey?" says Coral, taking a step toward him. "Then let me tell you, you black dog—and you, too, mister mate, that you're to keep your hands off these men of mine, d'ye understand?" He shook one thick finger almost under Summerville's nose, and went on, speaking through his teeth: "There's to be no hazing on *this* ship, my buck! If there is, I'll do it myself—and if I take a hand, the Lord Almighty help you all! I've had 'most enough o' your highfalutin' airs for some time past, you piney-woods cracker, you!"

Summerville's tanned face went a sickly yellow. He was a proud man, as I'd found out, but always kind and courteous, even to the crew; sometimes too much so, I thought. So, to be called a "cracker" by Coral was just about the limit. His eyes narrowed up; then, says he:

"You are no gen'leman, seh!"

Coral's fist shot out, taking Summerville full in the chest, and driving him across the deck clean to the scuppers. Lucky there was no weight to him, or his chest would have been stove in like an eggshell. But the sight was too much for old Sam.

"Hol' on, dar!" says he, and swung at Coral. If the blow had landed, there's no doubt but the archdeacon would have quit, for the time being. Instead, he ducked with a quickness you'd never have thought him capable of, and the next second he had landed a punch on the side of the negro's head that sent him to join his master.

"Good boy, Jimmy!" says one of the laborers.

Coral turned on him, fairly foaming with rage. "Hold your jaw!" says he. "Who ye speakin' to, ye sweep?"

The man shrank back before the sight of him. Thinks I: "There's something mighty funny here! So to this crowd Coral is Jimmy Legs!" The idea hit me like the archdeacon's fist had hit poor old Sam. It came over me, too, that, for the captain of the vessel, I wasn't cutting much of a figure.

"Look-a-here, Mr. Coral," said I, stepping forward. "Suppose you leave all this to me! I'm in charge here!"

He turned on me so savagely that, for a second, I was tempted to let him have the pin. Then his face suddenly cleared, and he took a quick look around.

"You're right—you're right!" says he. "I should not have lost my temper, captain. We must not have this

sort of thing—too bad, too bad!" He turned to the laborers. "Go forward, where you belong, men," says he, "and let's have no more quarreling. I'll look into this thing; but keep to your own part of the ship. Captain"—his rolling eyes, still bloodshot from his rage or the drink in him, rolled back at me like they were set on swivels—"I am very sorry to have to handle your mates so roughly, but we must have discipline. I can't afford to put up with any disrespect. Now, what started all of this?"

The laborers were still lingering, and at these words they waited to hear what I might say.

"It's my doing," said I. "My orders to Mr. Summerville were to keep these here workmen to their own part of the ship."

"And why," says Coral, "did you take it upon yourself to give such an order as this?"

"Why?" I answered. "Because they ain't cabin passengers! They're just contract laborers, that's what they are, ain't they? Do you want a gang like that"—I jerked my head toward the larries still standing there, listening—"to mix in with our women folks? Why, they ain't got any more business on the quarter-deck than the crew, as I see it!"

"Then," says Coral, in a harsh voice, "you see it wrong! These men"—he shot a look at Ketcham and two or three of the other pilgrims, who were listening in a grim sort of silence—"are, for the time being, just like any of the rest of us. Are we not all fellow workers in this enterprise? I am sure that I don't know where you got such an idea," says he, looking at me sternly. "Some of these men—Simon Yellow and John Forbes"—he nodded at the group—"are old friends of mine, and no better men will you find. Because they happen to be a little rough in appearance, from living in a rough country, is certainly no reason for starting in to haze them, is it?"

He looked around, then shook his head. "This has all been most unfortunate," says he. "We have all been in the wrong—all of us. Now, let us see if, from this time on, we can't have peace." He turned to his larries. "You men stay forward for the rest of the day. Take your mates, here, with you. Captain, tell the doctor to look to *your* people. Now, let us try to forget the whole unfortunate affair, and have no more misunderstandings."

And so he jawed along, finally walking aft to sooth the pilgrims, while I helped the doctor get Summerville to his bunk. Sam was none the worse for his crack on the head, but the Georgian was a mighty sick man. He didn't say anything, but there was a deep glow in his eyes that told me, so far as he was concerned, the business wasn't finished by a long shot. When, finally, we'd got him fairly comfortable, and the doctor had gone out, says he:

"Captain—I wondeh if this matteh is as cleah to youall as it is to me?"

"What d'you mean, matey?" said I.

"Just this, seh. This yeah gang we took aboahd to-day is nothing mo' nor less than Coral's bodyguard. Laborers? Nonsense, seh!"

A sort of a nasty shiver went through me.

"You mean," said I, "that Coral calculates to carry things with a high hand, from now on?"

"If it becomes necessa'y," Summerville answered. "Fo' some time I have had my doubts about this yeah Coral pe'son, but since he has shipped this gang o' toughs, I have them no longeh, seh. As long as Coral can get what he wants without vi'lence, all right and good. But if he meets with opposition, theah are his backers, seh!"

"It's an ugly outlook," said I.

"Ve'y," said the Georgian, in his dry voice. "I feel pow'ful sorry fo' these po' pilgrims. But, captain"—his pale eye fastened on me without the slightest waver—"something tells me that this Coral is not long fo' this world."

"Eh?" said I. "What's that?"

"I mean, seh," says Summerville, "that I am not the man to be knocked about like a niggeh, seh. As long as

I am in the employ of this pe'son, I shall serve him with obedience. But I do not think that I shall be in his employ much longer."

"And then?" I asked.

"Then, seh," says the Georgian, and his thin lips quivered a little, "then—I shall kill him, seh!"

IV.

The rest of that day I spent trying to get a word alone with Mary, but it was no use. John Coral was all over the place, buzzing around like a Kansas City real-estate agent, talking to this one and that one of the pilgrims in his bluff, hearty way, and doing his level best to wipe out the nasty impression he'd made in the afternoon.

It was plain that he was succeeding, too, being a master hand at making folks think like what he wanted them to; and, besides, there's a certain timid kind of person that's always fascinated by a bully. They seem to feel to him the way that his owners do to an ugly dog. "Yes," they say, "he is a mite cross with strangers, but, bless you, *I* could lug him around by the tail!"

Coral was joking the men, and making up to the women, and explaining how sorry he was to have to be firm. He even rigged a swing for the kids from the ridgepole of the after awning, and stood there, pushing them back and forth, and talking to the mothers, as anxious to please as the young minister at a Sabbath-school picnic! But I noticed that old man Ketcham had little to say to him, and the same with two or three of the others, and pretty soon they hauled away in a bunch, and got their heads together in a mighty earnest chin-chin—all of which bothered Coral considerable, to judge by the worried, slant-eyed looks he hove in their direction. Before long he got tired, and went below for a minute, and as he passed me there was an ugly look about his mouth.

Hardly had I got into my pajamas and thrown myself down on the sleeping mat for a four-hour Turkish bath, the night being close and sultry, than I heard a heavy step in the alleyway, and Coral's big bulk filled up the place.

"A word with you, Captain White," says he, and came to anchor on my transom. I swung my legs over the edge of the bunk and told him to forge ahead.

"About that trouble to-day," says he, and I noticed that his eyes were bloodshot and his breath reeking of rum. "Is the mate badly hurt?"

"It's not your fault," said I, "that his chest ain't stove in, like a busted accordion."

"I didn't ask you that," says Coral, in a nasty way. "I asked if he was badly hurt."

"Ask the doctor," said I. "So far as I know, he can do duty in a day or two."

"Well," says Coral, "he don't need to—nor you, neither, Mr. Jasper White—nor that black dog of a second! I've had 'most enough of the highfalutin' airs of the lot of you! There are men forward that can run the vessel just as well as what you can!"

I gave my shoulders a shrug. "All right-o," said I. "But let me tell you one thing—and that is, that you're choosing a mighty bad place to swap horses, right here in the middle of the stream, like. There's islands all about us, and swift currents in between, and the glass ain't acting any too well behaved, this last twenty-four hours!"

"Don't you worry," says Coral, and he spoke in his ugly, Jimmy Legs' voice. "Simon Yellow knows the Banda Sea like you know how to sling your jaw—and that's saying a lot. And there's one thing more I want to tell you, young fella'"—he leaned toward me, shaking his big finger almost in my face—"and that is, just you keep your lamps off Mary Ketcham—savvy?"

Well, here it was, broken out at last! And, to tell the truth, I wasn't sorry. More than that, for some reason I wasn't the least mite afraid. Coral never could scare me like he could other people—not that I was any braver, but perhaps because I'd seen him badly scared myself. He couldn't

frighten me, and he darn well knew it, and no doubt that gave me more confidence than anything else.

"So," said I, "that's what I been waitin' to hear for some time past! Then we've seen the last of Archdeacon John Coral, haven't we? I looked for him to shift his ballast on gettin' clear of Palmerston!"

He gave me a goggle-eyed stare, then lowered his eyes a bit.

"What the hell you drivin' at?" says he, in a growling voice.

"There you are!" said I. "There's Jimmy Legs a-talkin'! Good old Jimmy Legs! He came aboard at Palmerston, Jimmy did, bringing his gang o' larrikins and a jug o' rum! I didn't think he was man enough to sit tight and carry through a big scheme, like this colonizing business, and it looks like I was right, don't it? No, Jimmy's got back to the rum puncheon, just like he used to. It'll be women next—white women instead of Kanakas—but it won't be Mary Ketcham, by the Almighty!" And I brought down my fist on the table, with a thump that made her shake.

Coral was staring at me, with his parroty tongue between his teeth and his face wet and blotchy. I leaned closer toward him, and he drew back a little. He swallowed once or twice, then hauled out his handkerchief and swabbed off his forehead.

"Ho!" says he, in an uncertain sort of voice. "Ho! So that's what *you* think, hey?"

"It's what all hands are beginning to think," says I.

"Then let me tell you," says he, "that you're damn well off your course, blarst you—and anybody else that thinks the same."

"Hear Jimmy talk!" said I.

"Shut yer mouth! You're off—way off." He was trying hard to get back his bluster. "And I'll trouble you to drop that name—savvy? I want ye t' understand that I'm in this thing to put it through—and I'm going to do it, if I have to beat in the head of every man aboard this ship."

"That's a good way to start," said I.

He half-raised himself up, then sank back, panting and glaring. I could see that he was fighting to get back his temper and his dignity and his John Coral way of speaking and acting. But it came hard—mortal hard. He'd let the beast in him out for a run, and it wouldn't go back to the cage. The rum had broken open the door, and he knew it, and it half-scared, half-angered him.

Certainly, he was making a stiff fight of it, as I could see from the different expressions that crossed his face and the tortured look in his bulging eyes. The best part of him was fighting for the upper hand; and, as I suddenly realized this, and thought of the months of hard work and intelligent planning he had spent, a sort of pity came over me. I felt suddenly as if he was a sick man.

"Look here, Coral," said I, "you've got two distinct natures, one good and big and intelligent, and the other that of a brute beast!"

He gave me a glare that had a sort of question in it, and gradually changed into an eager look. Then his eyes went down to the deck.

"By God, I believe you're right!" says he.

"Of course I'm right," said I, "and let me tell you something. What gives the savage in you the upper hand is—*rum!*"

He drew back with a scowl, then threw me one of his slant-eyed looks.

"I didn't come here for a temperance lecture," says he.

"Just the same, you're getting it," I answered. "When you are in your right mind, all hands have got a heap of respect for you. But when you come in here loaded to the guards and try to bully me, and talk about disrating me, and wind up by warning me to keep my eyes off Mary Ketcham, you make me sick! I've got no more fear of you than I have of a performing bear; you've got the strength of four men, maybe; but so has the bear."

Coral caught his breath, and his face got purple.

"Damn your eyes!" says he, "do you know who you're a-speakin' to?"

"Yes," said I, "to Jimmy Legs. If it was John Coral, I'd be speaking with respect!"

He leaned his elbows on the table, and glowered at me for a moment, as if trying to make up his mind what tack to take.

"Huh!" says he finally. "Well, young fella', let me tell you something. John Coral or Jimmy Legs, I'm going to have that girl."

I could feel the blood going into my head with a rush. Up to this time I'd had the weather gauge of Coral, keeping myself well in hand and relying on my headpiece, the difference between us being that of a human being and a savage; but, at this last speech of his, I turned a bit savage myself, and that spoiled the balance. For I jumped up off the bunk and shoved my fist almost into his face.

"You try it, you —— —— Kanaka thug!" said I. "You try it once, and see how long you last! Mary Ketcham is my lawful, wedded wife, and I've got the papers to prove it! I married her back there in Barton, d'ye savvy? She's *my wife,* curse you, and one shady move from you and there'll be a fine chunk o' shark bait out there in the Banda Sea!"

Well, there it was out, and I'd lost my temper and with it the grip I'd had on Jimmy Legs. But, worse than that —and I was quick to feel the change —was the effect on the man opposite. I'd thought to hear a roar and to feel the bulk of him atop of me, and was ready to take my chances in the cramped quarters, and maybe get to reach my gun in the locker on which Coral was sitting. But there was no need; for, almost as I'd finished speaking, and stood there, braced and tense, I saw the change.

What with the shock of surprise from what I told him and the sight of myself, thirsty for fight, the thick, rum-ridden brain of Jimmy Legs got a jolt that woke the keener sense of John Coral. As we eyed each other, I saw the man's eyelids narrow and the intelligence come back to the eyes themselves, and then a sort of sardonic grin fastened itself on the mouth that had been loose-lipped a minute before.

The fight was off for the moment—that was plain enough—and I sank back on the bunk, cold and twitching, and cursing myself for a fool.

For a full minute neither of us spoke; then, says Coral, and the voice and words were those of the archdeacon:

"So *that's* it! Well, well, well—and I might have guessed!"

He looked at me thoughtfully, nodding his head a little, and without the slightest sign of the rage I'd expected. "So," he goes on, "you tricked me from *the very start! Back there in Steep* Hollow, while you were eating my bread and sleeping under my roof, you tricked me—and in Seattle, when you were spending my money——"

"Oh, go to hell!" I interrupted. "Your money nothing. It was Hubbard's money, and the little I've got of it I've earned, all right. You make me tired!"

Coral gave me a smile that worried me a lot more than ever any of his bad talk had done.

"Well, anyway," says he, "you got ahead of me, didn't you? So you two sneaked off and got married, hey? And now you're man and wife, whom God hath joined together, and let no man put asunder! So! That alters the case, of course." He hove himself up onto his feet, threw a sidelong look at me, and yawned. "Well," says he, "it's late, and this is your watch below. Good night, *Captain* Jasper White."

And out he went and down the alleyway, leaving me more uneasy in my mind than ever I'd been since the voyage began. For Jimmy Legs I didn't care three whoops in a gale of wind, but for Archdeacon Coral I had a heap of respect; and, to own up, a mite of fear, too.

There was no such thing as sleep after that, so I picked up a copy of "Sailing Directions for the Molucca Sea," and was just starting to read when there came a step at the door,

and here was Sam, looking in, with a grin that stretched from ear to ear.

"Mis' Mary she dar, sah," says he, "behine de w'aleboat. She send me ter fetch you, sah."

Nothing could have suited me better, as there was a lot of need that I should have a few words with the girl. I told Sam I'd be right up.

"If you sight Coral while we're talking," said I, "sing out to the man at the wheel, and ask him how she's heading. That's the signal, understand?"

"Yassir—dat's right, sah," answered Sam.

I pulled on my clothes, and went up to find Mary behind the boat, which was swung in on deck, she sitting on the rail, with her back against the davit. The next minute she was in my arms.

"Jasper," she whispered, "I had to tell you something."

"I know, sweetheart," said I. "Coral won't wait any longer?"

"You guessed?" she asked.

"No," I answered. "Coral told me so himself, not half an hour gone—and then I told him something, too." And with that, I gave her my whole interview with the man.

"Now, sweetheart," said I, when I'd finished, "the sooner all hands know the state of affairs, the better. Coral means business; he's gone to think it over, and dope out a plan. To-morrow will be Sunday, and after divine service I'll get up and announce that we're married. But don't you wait for that. You go ahead and tell your father and mother, the first chance you get!"

Mary drew a little closer, and her voice when she spoke was low and unsteady.

"What do you think that Coral will do?" she asked.

"He'll make a bluff at setting the marriage aside," said I. "No doubt he's all fitted out with legal backing for running the colony like he wants to, so we must count on the support of the people. Coral would hardly dare ride slap-bang over the opinion of the whole crowd."

"No-o," says Mary, "but he's so dreadfully persuading, Jasper. He seems to be able to make folks think whatever he wants them to!"

"That's true," said I, "but we must do a little canvassing of our own, Mary. That's where you can do more than I. Get the women on our side; meanwhile, I'll be keeping an eye to windward, and if Coral tries any of his Jimmy Legs tricks, I'll dart an iron into him. The chances are he'll start in by disrating me and putting one of his larries into my billet; and I hope he will!"

"Why, Jasper?" asks Mary.

"Because," said I, "nothing would set the crowd more against him. They sort o' like the way I've run this packet, and some of 'em have said so. More'n that, nobody's got any use for these larrikins of Coral's. Then, your father and one or two others ain't any too pleased at the way he used the mate. And now, dear, you'd better go below," said I, "for it's almost eight bells, and I got to take the watch."

Mary's arms slid around my neck; and her face, sweet with the dew of the night, pressed against my own. At that moment, nothing mattered so little to me as Jimmy Legs and his gang o' jailbirds. The next minute, she was across the deck and down through the hatch like a ghost—and none too soon, for, almost as she disappeared, here came two dark figures from forward, and at the same instant old Sam sings out:

"W'eel, dar! How yo' haid?"

I drew back behind the boat as Coral and the man they called Simon Yellow fetched up alongside and stopped for a moment, just abeam.

"Then you can take her the rest of the way?" says Coral.

"Sure, Jimmy," says Yellow. "I know this 'ere place like I know W'itechapel!"

"All right," Coral growls, "then I'll put this damn Yank under arrest for insubordination. I had my fill o' *him!*"

Says the other: "W'yte a bit, Jimmy. Wot's the bloomin' 'urry?"

"He's in my way, blight him!" Coral growled.

"Meanin' wiv the lydy? No bloomin' fear, Jimmy . . . "

They walked the other way, and as they disappeared in the murk forward I came out from behind the boat. "So," thinks I, "Coral means to put me in irons!" At first, I was all for a fight, and stood for a minute, figuring on how it would do to arm Sam and some of the sailors, and maybe go to Ketcham with what I'd just heard. But that, I knew, would mean bloodshed, Coral's crowd being a desperate hard gang; and bloodshed I certainly didn't want, for the sake of the women, Mary in particular.

Thinks I: "What if they downed Ketcham and me, and took charge o' things in general? A nice outlook that would be for all hands!"

Besides, I couldn't be sure of the crew, having had to put the fear of the Lord in the hearts of some amongst 'em; while Coral, as they knew, was the man that paid the freight, and he, besides, forever spoiling them with extra grub, liquor, and the like. He was a liberal man, Coral was—with the poor old Prophet's money!

"No," thinks I, "let him put me in irons, if he likes. It will do *him* more harm than *me*, and there's little danger of old Ketcham giving him his daughter, and Ketcham a law-abiding man and no fool, nor no coward, either, for all his psalm-singing way."

So, at eight bells, when I saw Coral and Simon Yellow coming my way, I stood fast and waited, without making a sign.

Says Coral: "White, you are relieved from duty. From now on Captain Yellow commands."

"Very good, sir," said I, and still waited, hardly thinking that Coral was going to stop there.

"That's all," says he, and began to talk to Yellow.

"Am I under arrest?" I asked, but Coral paid no attention, and I had to repeat the question.

Coral swung on me, impatient-like. "Arrest?" says he. "No! What makes you think you're under arrest? I don't consider you a fit person to command the vessel—that's all. I want a man that can maintain discipline without violence, and it appears that you and these freak mates of yours can't! That's all!"

For a minute I could only stand there and gape. Then the craftiness of it struck me, and I could have wept with rage. That was the John Coral of it! Instead of putting me in irons, which would have made the pilgrims mad and got me a lot of sympathy, he just ousted me out of my billet, on the ground that I couldn't run things without fighting and blows, which was the same as saying I wasn't a proper officer! And I knew enough of his methods to be sure that it wouldn't be many hours before he'd satisfied all hands and brought them to his way of thinking!

So here I was, a useless piece of dunnage, with no billet, disgraced-like, and bound to announce the next morning to all hands that I was the lawful husband of Mary Ketcham!

This thought fetched me up, all standing. And then an idea came to me like a flash, and I turned to Coral.

"Look-a-here, Mr. Coral," said I, "you may be the promoter of this here expedition, but I want you to understand that I am the captain of this vessel. I'm signed on for the voyage and responsible for the safety of the ship and all on board. If you want to fire me, you'll have to wait until we get in port. While we're at sea, I'm the chief here, and don't you forget it!"

For an instant, Coral seemed to waver; and then, from the main companionway, came the words:

"I think, Brother Coral, that Captain White is in the right."

All three of us spun in our tracks, and there was the Prophet, his white hair shining through the murk. The old man had found it hot below and come up for a breath of air.

I heard Coral stifle a curse. For a moment he was fair staggered. But Simon Yellow, quick-witted cur that he was, saw the chance to put me in the wrong, and acted on it like a flash.

"'Ere, yeou," says he, in his filthy,

Cockney voice. "Deon't ye kneow w'en yer fired? Sling yer bally 'ook off my quarter-deck. Hi'm marster 'ere!" And with that, he grabbed me by the collar and gave me a fling forward.

That was more than flesh and blood could stand. Around I spun, and was back at him before ever he could sidestep. *Biff*—and I'd put one on the side of his jaw that clean lifted him off his feet. Then, before he'd struck the deck again, *biff!*—plum between his eyes, driving him along the deck like a bundle of old clothes; and he was a big brute, too!

And then, as I turned, it seemed as if the mainmast had landed on my head, and down I went, and out into a whole firmament of shooting stars.

When I came to I was in my bunk, and long before I'd got back where I belonged the *throb-throb* of the engines had mixed into my dreams, and I thought that it was the chunk of the oars and I a boat steerer in a whaleboat, pulling up to a school of humpbacks, and I was telling the crew to muffle their oars for fear we might gally them. Then, suddenly, up rose a big black mass, dead ahead—and came foaming at us.

"Fightin' whale!" yells the harpooner, and "Starn all!" I hollered; but too late, for here he was atop of us, and the next minute I was spinning around in the green water—and opened my eyes to see the doctor beside me, swabbing my head, and the water from the sponge running down into my eyes.

"Hello!" says I.

"Well," says he, "how d'ye feel?"

"All right," says I, rather surprised to see the daylight coming through the porthole. "What struck me, anyhow?"

"Coral," says the doctor; then dropped the lid over one eye and gave the least mite of a backward jerk to his head, from which I gathered that somebody was listening outside.

"You are under arrest, White," says the doctor, who was a quiet, oldish man, with gray whiskers. "Mr. Coral reports that you attacked Simon Yellow; and, when you had knocked him down, turned against himself——"

I interrupted him with a short laugh. "That's likely, ain't it?" I said.

"Well," answered the doctor, with a worried look, "that's none of my affair. You are not hurt, barring a bruise on the top of the head, and all you need do now is to keep quiet and wait for further orders." And with that he got up and went out; and as he passed through the door I caught a glimpse of one of Coral's gang just outside.

"Well," thinks I, "Coral's to windward, all right, but just the same I'll bet the pilgrims are mighty worried in their minds. The Prophet is a witness that the fight wasn't of my starting. Here's the skipper and both mates laid out by Coral since Palmerston—and that's not bad for an archdeacon!"

The ship was running like she was in a lake. I glanced at the telltale compass overhead, and what I saw fetched me up, all standing. For the course that I'd laid out was shifted two points to the north'ard. Next I took a squint at the glass, and here she was, dropped two-tenths since I'd gone on deck at midnight. It was then six of the morning.

"Here, you!" I called to the man outside. "Go get Coral—Jimmy Legs!"

There was a rustle, and a hard-looking mug was shoved around the edge of the bulkhead.

"Wot you want?" he growled.

"Get Jimmy Legs, you swab!" said I. "And get him quick! Tell him I say the way this ship's heading she'll be on the rocks an hour after nightfall. Hump yourself, now!"

He gave me an ugly look, then started off, growling. A few minutes later, back he comes with Coral, who'd either been asleep or hitting the jug hard, to judge from his eyes.

"Well," says he, "and what do *you* want?"

"Jimmy," says I, "d'ye see that telltale?"

He looked up at the compass, and growled. "Well," says he, "and what of it?"

"That means," said I, "that this here scrub skipper of yours is trying to get gay. I said that I'd fetch your darn island come Tuesday, didn't I?"

"Well?" says Coral.

"Well, I calculated to go around outside the islands, the other passage being mighty ticklish, even in good weather. Now, this here Yellow person has taken his departure from where I pricked off our position at midnight, and he's calculatin' to show what a dandy navigator he is by beatin' my scheduled time by twelve hours —savvy?"

Coral stared at me a moment; then: "Don't you worry," says he, but his voice wasn't overconfident. "Simon Yellow knows his business, all right. And don't you try any of your bluff games on me! I'll have you out o' this cozy berth o' yours——"

"Jimmy, old hoss," I interrupted, "did you ever hear tell of an instrument they call a barometer?"

"Huh!" says Coral, rolling his red eyes at me, he angry, but sort of worried.

"Because," I went on, "it's plain enough that Yellow never has—what with his choosing a passage that's dangerous in fine weather, and the bottom droppin' out o' the glass. Now, that's all, Jimmy, old pal," said I, rolling my back to him. "Go and chew on what I've just told you—and chew it dern hard, or in a mighty few hours we'll be talkin' it over in hell.

"The rocks are steep down here, Jimmy, and the water's mighty deep between. Just cast your eye on that twenty-five hundred fathom line, running up to the reefs off Turtle Island! Twenty-five hundred fathoms—and six times that is fifteen thousand feet—nigh onto three miles deep, matey-o! So there's plenty o' water under her until she bumps—then off she slides; and, what next, hey, Jimmy?

"Why, it's plain as Simon's face must be this nice, warm morning! Havin' no water-tight bulkheads, off she slides —and down she goes—three miles, Jimmy, and all hands with her, and a hell of a night, to judge by the looks of things."

I rolled over in the bunk and stared up into his face, which was yellow and sickly looking. "You fool!" said I, "this ship ain't no more business in here than that Cockney sweep of yours has business on the quarter-deck."

Coral was badly jolted—there was no doubt about that. He hadn't much real courage, Coral hadn't, and I'd already noticed once or twice, when we'd struck a bit of a blow, that he'd acted mighty restless and uneasy. But if Coral was bothered by what I said, then the man he'd stationed there on guard was plumb scared. He was a landsman, from the look of him, and what I'd just said sounded to his ears like the end of the world.

For a full minute Coral stared at me, unable to make up his mind.

"Huh!" says he, and hesitates, like. Then, suddenly, he turned on his heel and went out.

When he'd gone, the larry who was on guard stood there, goggling at me like he wanted to ask some questions, but didn't think it would be much use. Finally, says he:

"Look-a-here, cap, is all that straight?"

I raised up on my elbow, and looked at him, with my lids narrowed.

"Matey," said I, "do you want to drown to-night?"

"I ain't crazy about it, none," he answered, sort of wetting his lips.

"Well," said I, "the way things are heading, you stand a bully chance. By sundown, Coral—Jimmy Legs, that is —will be loaded to the guards, and as for Simon Yellow, that don't cut any fog! It's splittin' tacks as to which is the most dangerous; a loaded man that knows his business, or a sober one that don't. Now, if you like your life, and ever want to sight your own, your native, land again, just you paddle aft and fetch Mr. Ketcham—the tall man with the gray whiskers and hatchet face, and any o' the rest o' the bunch that you run foul of."

For a moment, he hung in the wind.

"Jimmy'd bash in me head," says he.

"All right," said I, turning away, "if you'd rather drown——"

That fetched him. Off he went, and a minute later back he comes with Ketcham, a man named Burns, and the doctor.

Ketcham gave me one of his timber-wedge looks, but didn't say anything, and I wondered if Mary had told him how we stood. But, knowing that we might be interrupted any minute, I cracked on, and stated the situation as I had to Coral, only in a different way, of course. They listened, in a stony sort of silence.

"Is that all?" asked Ketcham, when I'd finished.

"Ain't it enough?" I asked. "Mind you, what this man Yellow means to do is possible, and very likely he can do it. But, in my opinion, considerin' the weather outlook and all, it's dangerous, and he ought not be allowed to try."

They sat there, thinking for a moment. Then Ketcham turned to the guard.

"Go outside," says he, "and shut the door!"

The man, pretty scared by this time, did as he was told.

"Captain," says Ketcham, leaning toward me, and speaking fast and in a low voice, "we have come to fully realize our position. Your opinion of Coral was right—the man is a clever and dangerous hypocrite!"

"Since leaving Palmerston, he has shown his hand, all right," says the doctor. "He's been drinking hard and steadily."

"The question is," says Ketcham, "what are we to do? Here he's got this gang of desperadoes behind him, and, very likely, the crew. We can't risk the chance of violence, what with our wives and daughters to look out for."

"Let's hear the captain's opinion," says Mr. Burns.

"The thing to consider now," said I, "is the safety of the vessel. I've already given Coral something to think about in that respect, and if you three go to him and say that you want me put back in command, no doubt he'll be glad enough to do it, that saving his face, like. Even then it's not going to be any too easy. Now, you'd better go, as there might be some trouble if Coral or Yellow was to find you here."

They got up, and opened the door. Ketcham was the last to go out, and, as he waited for the others, I said:

"Did Mary tell you?"

He looked at me, with a half frown.

"Yes," says he. "We will talk about that, later."

Well, the day wore on, and nothing happened, except that the glass kept on dropping, and the air was that heavy you could feel the weight of it on your chest, like a woolen blanket, and just as hot! I lay there, with the sweat pouring off me in streams; and, when eight bells struck, at noon, I decided that Yellow didn't want my berth just yet because it was so perishing hot. Another guard relieved the first one, and lay snoring in the alleyway.

Thinks I: "Coral has either refused pointblank to do what Ketcham wants, or else he has managed to persuade them that he knows what he's doing, and that I am just lying, so as to get back in command."

This seemed quite likely, as, if, after what I had said, Yellow made the passage all right, it would send Coral's stock up and mine down. And no doubt Coral was by this time so chock full of rum as not to mind the danger.

They served me out a foremast hand's ration, and, about five in the afternoon, what, with the fearful heat and all, I fell asleep. A crash on the deck overhead woke me up. It was rain—and, as I listened, I heard wind with it, too. Wind? "Well," thinks I, "if she ain't pipin' up some eighty miles an hour, I'll eat the chronometer!" But the rain was coming down with such an all-fired roar that you couldn't hear much else.

Soon it got dark. I lit my standing-light, noticing that the ship had a heavy list to port, from the weight of wind on the starboard beam. Almighty! but it was piping—and what, with skylights and ventilators and ports and hatches

battened to keep out the deluge, a man could scarcely draw breath, down there below.

Aboard an iron vessel, the wind and rain on the skin of her would soon have cooled things off, but the heavy timbers of the old *Moonlight* were soaked full of equatorial sun, and it struck me that a man going sudden-like from my cabin to hell would be apt to take cold!

My head was all right by this time, and, seeing no guard in the alleyway, I went out, meaning to open up some of the lee portholes, there being no sea to speak of, and we under steam, of course.

I went aft into the stuffy little saloon, and there were the poor pilgrims, packed in like a school o' moss bunkers, and the air a sort o' heavy steam. It didn't take me long to get the portholes open, though the swell didn't clear them by any too much, the ship being hove down so by the squall.

At sight of me there went up from the pilgrims a sort of sigh of relief, that cut me mighty deep. Little I could do, even if told to take command, as I'd noticed by the telltale that the course had been slightly altered again while I was asleep. There was no doubt in my mind but that Coral would have given a lot, just then, never to have disrated me. But, since he had done so, it was better for all hands that the man who had started to make the passage should stick to his job, rather than hand it over to another. Only for realizing this, I've little doubt but that Coral would have had me back.

But the pilgrims couldn't understand this, and some rumor of the danger we were in having got around, all hands started in to cuss out Coral. He was a mighty unpopular sort of Moses, John Coral was, just then.

I was curious to know what was going on overhead, and started for the deck, only to find the main companion barred and bolted from the outside. Solid teak it was, like all the deck fittings, scuttles, booby hatches, and the rest. Going forward, I found the iron door of the engine room bolted. We were locked in below, tight and fast, and there wasn't much doubt but that anybody forcing a hatch would get a capstan brake across the head the minute he shoved it out.

If we hit anything, the archdeacon meant to have first whack at the boats —and the pilgrims could drown, and be darned to them! The fact that he and his bullies were all either in the forecastle or the forward deck house, and that the passage from the pantry to the forecastle was closed off, made it plain enough.

As soon as I discovered this, I took Ketcham and some of the men aside, and explained matters. They didn't say much, but it did me good to see the set of their mouths and eyes. Mind you, these men were all right, barring only that Coral had made religious dupes of them. But they were pretty well cured of that by this time!

"This place where we ought to be now," said I, "is just one mass of islands of all sizes, with deep water between. You notice that there ain't any sea to speak of? That's because the land lies all about. If it were daytime, you could count a dozen islands. Now they are running the ship dead slow. The place is so narrow they got to keep her going; but, if we hit anything, it oughtn't to be very hard. If we *do* hit, don't make a move until I have a look below. But, meanwhile, let every man-jack of you arm himself; and, if we should have to leave her, then up we go on deck as quick as we can batter open the hatches. Once there, I guess you know what to do with Coral and his gang, don't you?"

Ketcham's eyes narrowed until they were two little, bright points, a-shining out of leathery slits.

"Um-hum, Captain White—we know —*we know!*" says he softly.

V.

In the midst of all this bother and excitement, it suddenly struck me that I hadn't seen fluke nor fin of Summerville or Sam. The mate's room was forward, near the galley, so I started down the alleyway to break him out,

judging that by this time he ought to be able to navigate again, no frames being stove in. As I drew near, I heard the Georgian's high-pitched voice, jawing away like a phonograph in a sailor ginmill, and I fetched up outside the door to listen. So help me, Bob, if here wasn't a religious debate in full swing—the mate against the Prophet, no less! And old Sam sticking his oar in to side with the last man to quit speaking!

"No, seh," says Summerville, "while I unde'stand yo' motives, and honor you fo' them, I kain't say that I agree with the libe'ty you have taken with Holy Writ!"

"No, sah! No mo' kin I, sah," cuts in Sam.

"But, my dear friend and brother," says the Prophet, sort of protesting, like, "the Bible which you have there in your hand was not written in English! Every translator, of whom there have been many, has added to and taken from, adapting the text to his own conception of the correct interpretation of these inspired prophets!"

"Dat's so—dat's suttinly so," says Sam. "De inte'pellation, dat is to say, de conspirashon. Yassir."

"My dea' sir," says the mate, "that which youall has reference to is me'ly to prese've a continuity of the text, ouah English language bein' inadequate fo' a lite'al translation of the ancient Sanskrit, Heb'ew, and Espe'anto in which the Holy Wo'd was fust written."

"So it am! So hit suttinly am!" chirps up Sam. "Hit sho' to be inalderquart a heap!"

"Shet up, niggeh!" snaps the mate, "y'all jaw too much! I have heah," he goes on, "the eighteenth verse of the twenty-second chapter of Revelations, wheah it is written—and, mind yo', seh, I do not offeh this in any spi'it of unkindness, seh. 'Fo' I testify unto eve'y man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.'"

"Amen!" says Sam. "Glo-o-ory be!"

"Shet up!" growls the mate, and goes on: "'And if any man shall take away f'om the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his pa't out of the book of life and out of the Holy City and f'om the things which are written in this book.'"

"A-men!" says Sam.

"But, my dear Brother Summerville," says the old Prophet, mighty troubled, and a bit scared, to judge from his voice, "what I have endeavored to do, and I trust with some inspiration, is to interpret that prophecy in its greater fullness. Are we not told to search the Scriptures for their hidden meanings?"

"Yassir," says Sam. "Dat we sho' is!"

I heard Summerville shut the cover of his Bible with a snap—all this time, mind you, the wind and rain making such an everlasting racket overhead that they had to shout, nearly, to make themselves heard, and the ship beginning to stagger a bit in the rising sea!

"Brotheh Hubba'd, seh," says the Georgian. "Fa' be it f'om me to criticise the effo'ts of a man of sanctified life, and a fellow sinneh of my own, But, if yo' was to ask me, seh, I would answeh that there is some inspiration, so regyarded, which is less the suggestion of God than of Satan. I will not say that the difficult and pe'ilous position in which we now find ouahselves is the result of a judgment di'ected toward you, seh, but I——"

Half sick with smothering the laughter in me, I thought it time to interfere, and gave the bulkhead a rap with my fist that fetched a yell out of Sam, he thinking just that moment of the devil.

"Look here, Summerville," said I, "Coral has gone and battened all hands of us down below."

"Battened down!" cries Summerville, jumping up from the bunk in a way that showed he wasn't suffering much.

When I'd explained the state of affairs the Georgian was all for a fight then and there, and old Sam's eyes were showing as much white as a man-eating broncho's. As I looked at the two of them, I couldn't help thinking of the

old rhyme—only putting Coral's name for Mr. Bluebeard.

"I'm sorry for Mr. Coral, I hate for to cause him pain,
But a hell of a spree there's bound to be, when we three meet again."

"We may be less in numbehs, seh," says the mate, "but this yeah Coral is a cowa'd, and so are all his gang."

"Just the same," said I, "for the sake of the women folks, we can't afford a fight. Besides, all the weapons for the colony—rifles, shotguns, machiné guns—and all the ammunition and explosives are down in the magazine. We got nothing but a revolver here and there."

Summerville knew as well as I that the magazine, especially constructed for inflammable stores, was 'way up in the forepeak, and could only be reached by a scuttle on the t'gallant forecastle. The magazine itself was built of double layers of boiler iron, with asbestos between, in case of fire in the hold, and the racket we made breaking into it would be heard up above, the hoist leading right through the forecastle.

"It's no use," said I. "We'll be out of danger, or on the rocks before we could get our crowd armed. Besides that, we'd have to get tools from the engineers, and they are both red-hot Coralites."

So back I went to the saloon; and, when I told Ketcham and the others how the land lay, they agreed with me that we'd best not try to do anything about it. But from the frozen faces and the set of their jaws, I could see that when the day of reckoning *did* come the account would be settled plumb up to the handle!

Pretty soon the Prophet came in, followed by Sam and Summerville, the three of them having been roasted out of the mate's room. The old man put up a prayer, but the pilgrims didn't act very devout like.

That was a pretty awful night, though I didn't mind it so much, as I got beside Mary on the transom; and there we sat, her hand in mine, and her head on my shoulder. Nobody seemed to notice us, what with being full of troubles of their own and the news having spread around that we were man and wife.

As the hours wore on, the weather seemed to be getting worse and worse. Never a lull in that cascade on the deck overhead, while the shriek of the wind aloft set the whole place humming.

At midnight there came a bit of a lull; and, slipping into my room an hour later, I saw that the glass had gone up a bit, and from that and the fact that the wind had started in harder than ever, I guessed that we'd passed through the storm centre, and that the weather might begin to mend.

Several times Ketcham had gone up and pounded on the companionway hatches, but nobody paid any attention, and the chances are he wasn't even heard, as the sea was by this time short and wicked, sweeping the decks from time to time, and twice I heard a crash that sounded like a boat being stove.

A little later, I woke from a sort of doze with the sense that something had happened. The wind and rain were still roaring away, but the vessel had become steady, as if in the dock.

Said I to myself: "Land to windward—and mighty close aboard!" I roused up, easing Mary down to the transom, and looked around. The pilgrims were all over the shop, some asleep and snoring, others broad awake and staring about with red-rimmed eyes. A steady blast of wind, rain, and spray was gushing through the open portholes, but nobody minded.

Suddenly came shouts overhead and the clatter of men rushing about the deck; a whole army, it sounded like. Then, roaring out above the racket of wind and rain, I heard Coral's big voice.

"Starboard—hard a-starboard!" he yelled.

The pilgrims roused up, wild-eyed and awful-looking in the sickly glare of the lamps.

"What's that?" cries Ketcham.

The ship, which had had a heavy list to starboard, began slowly to right herself, by which I would have known that she was swinging to meet the

wind, even if I hadn't heard Coral's order. For a few minutes we were steady as a church, then slowly she heeled to port.

"They're coming around," said I; "sighted breakers, most likely."

Whatever it was, they were losing no time to get away, for the beat of the engines quickened. Over she went to port, but the sea was still as a lake.

"Lan' all 'roun'," says Sam. "Jes' as still an' nice as de ole Jeems River!"

We heard the engines stop, then go astern, as we could tell from the vibration and grinding under us. Then came the rattle of the chain cable running out through the hawse pipe.

"Anchorin', by gum!" says Summerville.

But the rattle kept on, and on, and on, and suddenly there was a jar that shook the ship; then silence.

"No bottom," said I, "and the chain parted. The dern fools let go without botherin' to take a sounding!"

The engines started ahead again, and at the same time came the clatter of feet over our heads, and a different kind of noise. A trained sailor man gets so he can sit down below and tell everything that's going on over him just by the sounds coming through the deck. This time there was a scuffle of feet near the rail, then a bump or two, which was followed by a jar and a sort of grinding noise.

Summerville and I looked at each other. We knew what that meant. They were swinging out a boat!

The engines were running at about half-speed, by which I reckoned there must be a current setting onto the land or reef, or whatever it was, for the wind was coming in a little abaft the beam. For perhaps ten minutes we waited, all taut, and half-expecting to hear her strike.

And then—Almighty! But she *did* strike! *Smash!* and the bow of her started uphill. *Whang—bang-o!* and she stopped, and the shock sent all hands of us in a heap. Then over she went to port, over and over, till the portholes were doused and three twelve-inch streams, welling in over the lot of us, who had slid down under them.

Fortunately, we three sailors were on top, and managed to get the portholes shut and the deadlights clamped over them. Then Summerville and I rushed below. There was no more water in the afterhold than might have been expected from the forward rise of her, so we skipped up to the berth deck, then forward and down into the forehold, where we found everything tight and no water coming down from forward. The engines were still running, but nobody answered when we hammered on the iron bulkhead of the boiler room, the door being bolted inside.

"We're not much hurt," said I, "and, being as she's a heavy, British-built, oak-bottomed vessel, it wouldn't surprise me any if she'd just slid right up, without taking any harm, to speak of."

"The way she went on felt that-away, seh," Summerville agreed.

So back we went to the saloon, and told the women it was all right, and then lent a hand with the companion hatch, which we soon managed to force. I had buckled on my gun when I passed my room, coming up from below, so, as soon as the hatch was burst, out I spun on deck, all organized for war, though more than suspecting, to tell the truth, that Coral and his gang had left her, as otherwise we would have heard from them. Sure enough, not a soul in sight, and here were two of the boats gone from the lee side, and the falls dangling.

I called all hands to look, and the remarks that came from those pilgrims when they realized that their archdeacon had battened them and their wives and children down below, to drown like rats in a trap, while he and his larries saved their skins, did me good to hear. They didn't say a great deal, being quiet men, but there wasn't any doubt about what they meant.

"Now," says I, "let me tell you something. We've come into this place, which must be pretty nigh landlocked, led by the hand o' God. As soon as

the day breaks and Coral and his crowd see that the ship is all right, they'll be wanting to come aboard. Do we let them, or don't we?"

There was a dead silence.

"Very likely they're armed," I went on, "and no doubt they may try to cut off the ship. There's Coral and his twelve bullies, that's thirteen; and four from the engine room, and that's seventeen; and my nine sweeps, that's twenty-six, all told. How many fightin' men have we got here?"

We took a tally, and found that we numbered nineteen.

"And that's a-plenty," said I, "seeing that, of the others, the only ones to be armed are probably Coral and his gang, and they only with revolvers. Now, it's my opinion that the ship's not badly injured, and, as it's probably not high water, the chances are that, by shifting some freight, we can warp her off. Meantime, we keep an armed guard. Our sailors can come back, as we may need them, but Coral and his outfit stop ashore until we're ready to sail. Then, if you like, we'll take them aboard, and carry them to Singapore under guard. As for your own plans, we can talk about them later. Now, how does that strike you?"

All this was on the lee side, where we were sheltered from the wind by the pitch of the deck, for the vessel was heeled to port at about forty degrees. The rain and wind had moderated some, or else it was that we were protected by high land to windward, for it was nothing like as bad as what it had been.

All hands agreed promptly to what I proposed, and Ketcham was starting to say something, when my eye was caught by a gray, moving object, close aboard. I jumped to my feet.

"Boat ahoy!" I hailed, at the top of my lungs.

Coral's voice answered.

"Aboard the *Moonlight,*" he cries. "Ship filling?"

"The ship's all right," I answered. "Now, sheer off before I fill ye full o' lead!"

There was a minute o' silence; then says Coral:

"We're comin' aboard."

"No, you're not, Jimmy," I hollered, and with that I pulled out my gun and sent a bullet singing over his head. There came back a yell that made me think I'd held a mite too low and got one of them.

"Hi, there!" yells Coral. "Who you shootin' at?"

"I'm shootin' at you, Jimmy," I answered, and fired again. "What's more," said I, "if you don't git a move on, all hands will open on you!" And with that I fired plumb at the boat.

We could hear Coral's curse as the men at the oars, not caring much for being potted at like that, gave way. A moment later, the boat had disappeared into the darkness.

After she'd gone, the first thing we did was to get into the magazine and serve out rifles to all hands—and those Northwesterners knew how to use them, too. Then Summerville and I had another look below; and, finding everything all right, a guard was set, and we waited for the daylight, which wasn't long in coming.

That sunrise was one of those sights a man never forgets. The rain had stopped nigh as sudden-like as it began, but the wind was still blowing, though it had shifted and was coming out of the sou'east. The low scud had driven off, and the heavy clouds above were broken and scattered, cut off in big masses, their edges tucked in under them.

With the dawn came the light—thin and lilac-colored, stealing in from all sides at once; and, as it grew, a great, purple mountain shot up close aboard us, and towered clear to the dome of the sky. Then here came land all around, islands pushing up from the velvet sea.

The wind dropped lighter and lighter, and there came a perfume of flowers and spices, and the clear call of birds. The same soft light hung over everything—a light that seemed to glow up from underneath the sea, till suddenly a great cloudbank on the skyline to

the east began to glow and burn, and change from black to smouldering brown, and from brown to the lurid color that comes before a squall.

Lighter it grew, crimson, then a lovely rose color, and everything changed color with it, until, all at once, with a glory that made your heart stop and seemed to ring in your ears as well, the sun blazed out above, and it was broad day.

The pilgrims dropped on their knees, and the old Prophet raised his hands above his head. Thank God, the scene was too magnificent for his garbled Scripture! In a deep, solemn voice, he recited the Nineteenth Psalm—just as it is written in the Bible:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork."

Even while this was going on, I was busy studying the surroundings. We were landlocked, to the north'ard by what seemed mainland, and on the other three sides by an archipelago, the islands small and scattered here and there. I guessed that Yellow had blundered into a bight of the south-east end of Ceram. The reef we had struck wasn't visible at any part.

Half a mile away, on the port hand, was a strip of beach, with one of our whaleboats hauled up on it, but the other was nowhere in sight. I reckoned that it had missed the point and been driven clear across to the islands beyond, some fifteen or more miles distant; but, whether the boat on the beach was Coral's or not, there was no way, just then, of telling.

I jumped below, and got my glasses. Up from the beach was the jungle, thick and glossy, and beyond that, on the higher, level ground, there was what looked like the ruins of an old fortress; and I reckoned that, very likely, it might be one of those that were scattered all through these islands by the old Dutch East India Company.

Beyond rose the mountain, which wasn't so high, seen in the stronger light.

Looking things over, the first thing that struck me was that we ought to have that whaleboat. I suspected that it belonged to Coral and his gang, from their position the night before when they hailed us. They were a desperate hard crowd, and as long as they had the boat we were in danger of a night attack; but, without the boat, we had them plumb blanketed. I called the pilgrims together, and pointed this out.

"Let's man the cutter," said I, "mount the machine gun in the bow, and go in and cut out that whaleboat. The chances are that all hands are back in the bush asleep, but even if they try to interfere we can give 'em what-for."

So we got the cutter over, and started ashore. Halfway in, and here came a man, walking down the beach, and it didn't need the glasses to tell that it was Coral. Down he came, cool as you please, and sits himself on the gunwale of the whaleboat, to wait.

"Now," said I, "he sees it's all up with him, so he's going to try the effect of some chin music. For Heaven's sake, don't let him josh you! Let *me* do the oratin' for the crowd."

In we shot, and grounded alongside the whaleboat. Coral never moved. Telling the others to stop where they were, I hopped out, and, never noticing Coral, stepped to the boat, and looked inside. There was nothing there but the usual gear, and in the bottom a harpoon, which I had chucked aboard one day when we were becalmed and some of us lowered to kill a blackfish.

Says I to Coral: "Shift your ballast off that boat. We need her in our business."

Without a word, and in a heavy, hopeless sort of way, he got off the boat, and, taking her by the stem, slid her astern till she was afloat.

"I suppose," says he, straightening up, "that there's no use in my saying anything?"

None of the people in the boat so much as answered him, and it only needed but one look at their faces to tell that the less he said the better.

The boat had a long sea painter, and

the anchor was carried up the beach almost to the bushes.

"I'll get it for you," says Coral, and starts up the beach.

"Don't trouble yourself," said I, not caring to be beholden to him, and half afraid that his meek, sorrowful way might stir up some pity with the pilgrims; "I can get it myself."

But he kept on, and I almost beside him. Seeing that I was bent on getting the anchor myself, he lagged a bit, his head hanging and his feet dragging through the sand like a man that's plumb discouraged. I reached the anchor, and was just about to lean over to pick it up, when a voice close behind me says, low and murderous:

"Keep on walkin', you scut, and hold your tongue, or I'll blow yer innards out!"

I spun around, and, so help me, if here wasn't Coral, his back to the boat and a heavy revolver in his fist, the muzzle shoved almost into my stomach!

"March!" says he. "Quick, now, and if ye make a shady move, there's the end of you!"

There was no choice. Coral was a desperate man. I was fair trapped. Half sobbing with rage and helplessness, I tramped on, not daring so much as to look back. There came a hail from the boat.

"Turn, and wave your hand!" growled Coral.

I obeyed, for a minute half tempted to snatch at my own gun. But that would have been no better than straight suicide, even if I did manage to kill Coral.

"Now, march!" says he, "and step lively!"

To the people in the boat it must have looked as if I had just got in conversation with Coral, and walked on past the anchor. Being a good fifty yards away, and with Coral's big bulk between, they couldn't see any more than that he was talking and making gestures, and I listening, like. Perhaps they thought that I had changed my mind, and decided to talk to the gang a bit about letting them back aboard. Coral's acting so meek and sorrowful, and the fact that he and his gang were ashore on a wild, savage island, with no food nor anything, took away all idea of foul play.

Almost to the fringe of bushes, Coral gave me a dig in the back with the muzzle of his gun.

"Tell 'em to wait!" says he. "No tricks, now!"

What was I to do? What would any man in such a fix have done? I swung on my heel, and, as I faced about, Summerville sang out:

"Where y'all going, cap?"

"'Wait a minute'—say that!" growls Coral. And, "Wait a minute!" I hollered, near crazy with having to do his bidding.

"Go on," says Coral, and I pushed into the bushes. The minute they closed behind us, says Coral:

"Now, hand over that gun of yours—or, hold on, I'll take it."

He disarmed me, then marched me straight ahead through the tangle and up the slope.

"To the left," says Coral presently; and I turned off, and presently came to an old, forgotten nutmeg grove, with its heavy, dark-green foliage and brownish-yellow fruit hanging down. We passed through this orchard, then came to a grove of great canary trees, their tall, straight trunks a mass of lianas and ferns. It was getting hot, and the air was steaming and thick with perfume, and we were both in a lather when Coral told me to stop. Not a sign of his gang had I seen anywhere.

Coral swabbed his face. Then, says he—and you can imagine my surprise:

"I'm sorry to have had to treat you this way, White," says he, and in his best archdeacon voice, "but I was driven to it. This was my only chance."

I just sat there, looking at him, with my mouth open. Naturally, I'd expected abuse and ill treatment.

"I saw plain enough," goes on Coral, "that you weren't any of you going to listen to me. You'd have just gone

off and left me marooned here, with no food and no boat, all alone."

"All alone!" said I. "Where's your gang?"

"Cleared out," says Coral. "The whole kit and boodle of 'em. As soon as it got light, Simon Yellow took a look around. 'I know this place,' says he——"

"A pity he didn't know it last night," I interrupted.

"That's what I told him," says Coral, in a bitter voice. "'It's Cape Kilwaru,' says he, 'and yonder's the old Dutch fort. There's a town about six miles up the beach,' says he, 'and that's better than rottin' around in the jungle, with no grub nor liquor. I'm off.' And off he went, and the rest of the crowd with him. I'd given them each a hundred and twenty-five advance, not thinking they'd get a chance to leave us. But they knew what they might expect if our people got hold of them."

"Why didn't you go with them?" I asked.

He buried his face in his hands. For a minute he didn't say a word—couldn't seem to find his voice, like. Then, says he:

"To tell the truth, White, even after what had happened, I couldn't bear to give up all hope of what I have worked so hard for." He looked up at me, his face haggard, and his eyes red and filled with tears.

Somehow, in spite of everything, I couldn't help but be sorry for him. But I tried not to show it.

"Well, Coral," says I, "there's no use in thinking about that now! Not after your battening all hands, women, children, and all, down below, and then scuttlin' off and leaving them to drown! Man alive, if it hadn't been that you were alone, and appeared to be unarmed, that crowd in the boat would have filled you so full of lead that you'd ha' done for a mooring! You've been an awful fool, Coral," I said.

He dropped his big shock head in his hands. "I know it," says he. "Nobody realizes that more than I do. You were right; it was the drink that did it! When I drink I'm Jimmy Legs again. But I'd done what I liked with that Hubbard outfit for so long, just bending 'em the way I wanted 'em, that I'd got to think they were mine, body and soul. But I wasn't so sure about some of you—you in particular, White; and, to tell the truth, I took on that Palmerston crowd just to—to——"

"To do what you did!" said I. "Bulldoze the rest of us, when we wouldn't stand for your drunken bullying! Well, you've sure made a nice mess of it all!"

"I know it." He shook his head. "Rum—just rum! If it hadn't been for the rum, do you suppose I would have used the mates that way—and put Simon Yellow in your billet? Look here, White, now that that gang of rips has gone, don't you think there's any chance for me?"

He stared at me a good deal the way a dog does when he watches you eat. I must say I was sorry for the man, but there was no use in giving him false hopes.

"Not the slightest in the world, Jim—Coral," said I. "We might have forgiven you for gettin' drunk and sluggin' us—though the mate has sworn to kill you—and even for lettin' that Yellow sweep run the ship ashore. But nobody will ever forgive you for abandoning the ship when she struck, and leaving the women locked below. There's some would kill you for that, Coral, and the Prophet cursed you at the end of his prayer.

"That crowd is done with you—and they're done with the idea of startin' a colony; and all they ask is to get back to their hopfields. You had a big chance, and you've gone and made a silly mess of it, just through rum and taking too much for granted. As for the ship, she ain't hurt, I don't reckon, and I see there's a good bit of tide here, and I wouldn't wonder if we managed to float her off, come high water."

"What then?" asks Coral.

"That ain't decided," said I, "but it don't affect you, no way. Since there's a town hard by, the best thing that you can do is to clear out for it, because,

I tell you frankly, Summerville is apt to let daylight through you if you hang around here. Besides, you got no grub."

Coral buried his face in his hands, and began to sob. I got onto my feet.

"Now," said I, "if you'll kindly hand over my gun, I'll be going. I'm sorry for you, John Coral, but I can't forget last night!"

He handed me over the gun, without looking up. Then, says he:

"Do you mind if I try to talk to them?" And he jerked his head toward the beach.

"Not the least," said I, "but it's a waste of breath."

"Anyway," says he, with a heavy sigh, "I'll make the attempt."

So back we went to the boat, neither of us speaking. The crowd looked mighty relieved to see me again. I didn't tell them how I'd come to leave, but when I said that Coral's crowd had left him, and he wanted to say a few words, all hands looked ugly as sin, and old man Ketcham brought down the butt of his rifle with a thump.

"John Coral," says he, and his face set like a flint, "this crowd has heard all it's ever likely to hear from you, Now, you hear something from me—and that is, if ever I clap eyes on your wicked face again, I'll kill you on sight!"

"And I," says Summerville, in his high voice, "am so'ely tempted to git ahaid of Mr. Ketcham!"

I took the painter of the whaleboat, and stepped aboard. As Summerville stopped speaking, I turned to Coral.

"Anything else you want to say?" I asked.

He shook his head, then dropped on the sand; and, rolling over onto his chest, buried his face in his arms, and his big body began to heave. It was a sickening sight, but sort of pitiful, too.

"Shove off!" I ordered.

The boat slid clear, and we turned and headed for the ship. Halfway out, we saw Coral heave himself to his feet; then, staggering like a drunken man, lurch up the beach, and plunge into the jungle.

The tide reached full flood at noon, when we saw that it was going to be something of a job to float the vessel off, she being still hard on the reef. I had been down in armor, and found that there was no great damage. The copper was ripped away, of course, and there was quite a job trimming it clean and tacking it in place. But she had slid up on her iron shoe, and the only damage to the hull was where a few planks on the starboard run were badly scored.

About one o'clock, we sighted the other whaleboat coming back, with the two engineers and the crew, and a mighty shamed and penitent crowd it was. Their excuse was that Coral's men had stood at the doors and hatches with drawn revolvers, and that, when the ship struck, they had got panicky with the others.

We took them aboard, because we needed them, but their lives didn't promise to be any too pleasant, and I logged all hands for desertion of duty in the face of danger, which was putting it mild, like.

As the ship lay, she was in no danger, to speak of, but I turned everybody to, shifting cargo aft, and carried out a stern warp to an anchor, though it took all of our boats full of cable to get into soundings. All hands being tired, we knocked off early; and, as I was leaning on the rail talking to Mary, the old Prophet came up and asked if he might be set ashore for an hour or so.

"You know, captain," says he, in his kind, polite way, "I was formerly professor of geology in Billings University, and the formation of these islands is very interesting. I should like to make a few examinations."

There was no reason that I could see for not obliging him, so we dropped the gangway, and hauled a whaleboat to the staging. Then Mary wanted to go, too, and that, naturally, suited me. The Prophet said something about the volcanic origin of the islands promising precious stones, as well as precious metals, at which Summerville, who was standing near by, pricked up his ears,

and said that he and Sam would pull us over, the hands being all at their supper. So off we went, and grounded on the golden beach, and threw out the anchor, setting off together to an outcrop of jagged rocks, just at the edge of the jungle.

Mary and I, having other things to talk about than rocks, and other things more interesting to listen to than a lecture on geology, strayed off in the direction of the nutmeg orchard where I had been taken by Coral.

Summerville and Sam stopped behind, with the Prophet. It was a great trio, that, and their chumminess ever since the beginning of the voyage had been a standing joke aboard—with everybody but Coral, that is. He got restless if anybody so much as spoke to the Prophet.

Ketcham had one day told me that, for all of his gentleness, the old man was no fool, and that, while Coral had the care of the accounts, he had never been able to touch a cent without the signature of the Prophet, who also had the funds in hand securely locked up in a safe in his own stateroom, which was, naturally, the best aboard, being the former owner's cabin.

Coral had often suggested that it would simplify things a lot and save the Prophet a good deal of trouble if he, Coral, were to have the power of attorney; but the old man said it wasn't necessary—said he needed some occupation, he, the Prophet did! So, as a matter of fact, Coral didn't have things so much in his power as he'd told me that he had!

Mary slipped her hand in mine, and we walked slowly down the beach. Crimson and gold and violet it was, with colors woven all together, like the inside of a pearl-oyster shell, and shot with tongues of quivering flame as the sun sank lower. A little breeze ruffled the turquoise bay, fluffing the surface with a rosy stain, that reminded you of the watered silks held up in the sun by the bumboat men in Singapore. Sheltered as we were, there was no surf, but the swell outside set the lagoon to breathing, with a long heave that shifted the wonderful colors on the still surface just like your pearl shell, when you turn it in your hand.

Out from the jungle came the hothouse smells, sweet and spicy, and rich as the heart of a honeysuckle. Fair drunk it made me, overpowering like, and the birds, singing their souls out in those rich, gurgling notes they love, just before the dark. High up on the mountain grew the jungle, a gorgeous crown of melting gold, as the shadows crept up from the sea, and the jungle itself began to wake and whisper and move as the night life turned out to go on watch.

The sweetness and the sadness and witchery of it set my heart to hammering like I'd run a race. Mary's hand fluttered in mine and squeezed back as my own closed on it. She looked at me aslant, and it seemed like I saw Eve in the garden of Eden, and there was no ship and no Coral and no pilgrims—only my lovely wife and me, alone in the place that God made for us.

Mary's lips were parted and the afterglow was all that laid the color on her clear face, for the blood had crept back from it as it had from mine, awedlike in the gush of feelings that gripped our hearts. Her eyes were bluer than the lagoon, and just as deep, and her hair gathered all the gold that was left in the shadow and shone like the crown of some enchanted princess. A princess she was to me, and more, for she was mine—all mine.

Hand in hand, and silent, we passed through an open place in the jungle and found ourselves in the old, abandoned nutmeg grove. The birds were the owners of the place, but Mary was the soul of it, and a hush fell as she spoke, and her voice was deep and tremulous, and my heart seemed to stop beating at the tone of it.

"Jasper," says she. "My—husband!"

I took her in my arms. Lucky she was a strong girl, not one of these dainty women of spun glass and sea foam. Even then, I feared as I loosed her that I'd been rough, but the blood

was in her cheeks again, and a laugh on the corner of her mouth, and her eyes a-flashing like rain on blue violets. But it cleared the air, did that "bear hug," as she called it, for the two of us had found our speech again.

"Jasper!" says she, panting and laughing, "that's the first *real* kiss since our wedding day!"

Then, as I was about to draw her close again, I saw a sudden change. The smile left her face and the color seemed to fade; it was like as if she were about to faint.

"Mary!" I cried. "What is it?"

She raised her hand without speaking, then half turned to look over her shoulder.

"What was that?" she asked.

"What was what?"

"Didn't you hear something—or feel something?" she drew closer to me, one hand half raised to her mouth, and the other on my arm, she looking over her shoulder. "Look!" says she, pointing. "There's something in those bushes!"

I'd left my rifle in the boat, not wishing to bother carrying it, but I was wearing the revolver, and I swung it in front, unbuckling the flap. There were savages on the island, I knew, Bugis and Malays and Bajaus and the like, but according to the book, these were friendly.

I stepped in front of her, drawing the gun. A bit of rock was lying at my feet, and I stooped, picked it up, and threw it into the scrub. There came a rattle and a crash. Mary screamed, then out jumped a big ape-baboon and loped off in the direction of the fort.

Mary was white as death. I looked at her and smiled.

"Shame!" said I. "To be frightened by a monkey—and your husband beside you!"

She moistened her lips, then smiled, but I could see that the fright had not quite left her.

"I'm silly, Jasper," says she, "but it's given me a dreadful turn. Let's sit down for a moment on that fallen tree."

So we walked to a gum tree, uprooted by the blow of the night before, and there we sat, Mary's head on my shoulder and my arm around her waist. For a moment we neither of us spoke.

Then there came a rustle in the brush behind us. I turned quickly, reaching for the gun, which I had laid on the trunk beside me, but my eyes being on the thicket my hand brushed the butt and knocked the weapon into the rank weeds.

Mary leaped up with a scream. There was another crash, then a voice that I'd never thought to hear again, boomed out:

"Hands up, Jasper White!"

And here was Coral's ugly mug scowling at me over the top of a double-barreled shotgun, while just behind him, half hid in the bushes were Simon Yellow and the man they called "The Kid."

VI.

Trapped again, so help me! Twice in the same day, and by the same man! That was the first thought crossed my mind. The second, and I take shame that it should have been so, was that Mary, no less than I, was covered by Coral's double-barreled gun. Only for that, and I'd have taken a chance and dropped behind the log and pawed after my own shooting iron, so mad was I with myself for being such a fool!

But even as close as Coral stood, Mary might have caught the edge of the charge if he had fired, and I realized that and shoved up my two fins so mortal quick that Coral grinned. As for Mary, she was speechless, poor girl, less from fright than surprise. No one of us had ever thought to see John Coral again, and some even had a sneaking pity for the man after the picture of him sobbing his heart out on the beach.

"Well, captain," says he, speaking in his archdeacon voice, which was common to him when not in liquor, for it was only the drink which brought out the coarseness of Jimmy Legs, "and what do you think of yourself now?"

"Precious little," said I, "and will

you kindly shove the muzzle of that gun away from Miss Mary? I'll not budge."

He laughed and came to the port arms. Simon Yellow stepped out of the brush and picked up my revolver, and badly off as we were, I had to grin at sight of my handiwork on his ugly face. One eye was plumb closed, and his two jaws were far from matching each other, like.

But this was small joy, what with the fix we were in. Here was Coral's yarn of the morning all a bluff, and a fine bit of acting, I must say. His gang had been back there in the bushes all the time. There was no more a town up the beach than there was an asylum for d—— fools like Jasper White, and the whole business was nothing but a trick to make us feel secure, so that we would keep no armed guard on watch at night!

Says Coral to Simon Yellow: "March them up to the blockhouse, you and The Kid. If he tries to get gay, load him up with lead—but gentle with the lady, you hear now?"

"Ay, ay," says Simon.

"Wait there for me," says Coral. "I've business down the beach." And with that he crossed the nutmeg orchard; and looking after him, I saw three more of the gang waiting at the far end. But what struck me right off was that Yellow and his mate and the others, there beyond, were armed with rifles—our own rifles from the magazine. Coral must have had up a case and stowed them away some place.

"Now then, yeou bloomin' Yank," says Simon, "step out to the left—and you with 'im, miss. None o' yer 'artfulness," says he, "or I'll drill ye."

There was no help for it, so off we started in file; myself, then Yellow, then Mary, and the Kid tagging along astern. This last freak was the smallest man not a regular dwarf that I ever saw. He was well proportioned, with none of the dwarf weaziness about him, nor bad looking; just an ordinary man of about thirty, shrunk down to quarter size. What with Coral and the two mates and this same Kid, we sure had a rum selection on the old *Moonlight*.

But just then you can bet that I wasn't reflecting much on our dime-museum possibilities! Now that the first rage and disgust with myself had blown off I was worried to the point of turning gray. And good reason, too! Here was my lovely wife in the grip of a man that from now on might be considered as an out-and-out pirate—for that he meant to cut off the ship I hadn't the slightest doubt. There was about twenty thousand dollars gold in the old man's safe, the most of it belonging to the Prophet, but some the savings of the pilgrims.

Thinks I: "Coral has no doubt by this time held up Summerville and Sam and the old man, and as soon as it gets dusky, which won't be long, he and his larries will go out in the whaleboat and, taking the ship by surprise, like, soon have command." What might happen after that I didn't like to think.

"Column left—march!" sings out Yellow, and I turned into a sort of gully where the hard clay had been scoured free of undergrowth by the deluge of the night before.

Up the slope it led, and up we followed it, slipping and sliding in the greasy stuff, with now and then a splash into a standing pool. The light was fading fast, and it was dark in the gully, that being not more than fifty feet wide with the dense foliage springing from the two sides and meeting overhead, making of it a tunnel, like. The air of it, too, was dead, and hot, and heavy, with a steam oozing from holes in the bank, and before we'd climbed fifty yards we were wet as though dipped into the sea.

It was no promenade for a Sunday afternoon, that wasn't, and what with sliding and slipping and grabbing at a twisting liana, and then jumping back with the thought that maybe 'twas a snake, and the place getting darker every minute, I was mighty glad when we suddenly reached the end of it and came out against a crumbling wall of masonry.

Looking on either side I saw that

we were in the moat of an old fortification, and that the gully was where the water had broken through the dike and drained down the hillside.

"Column right!" says Simon Yellow, and I marched along the wall till presently I came to where it had caved in and half filled the moat. Now that we were out of the tunnel there was a bit of daylight left, and I could look about and see what the place was like. If I'd been alone I'd have taken a chance and made a break for it, but with Mary there, no fear! Yellow saw this, of course, and was not so careful as he might have been otherwise. As for the Kid, we lost him out somewhere on the way up! The eighteen-inch legs of him weren't constructed for that business, and he toting a heavy magazine rifle!

"Up ye go!" says Simon, and I turned to give Mary my hand, for the stones were tumbled in any old way and half covered with ferns and vines. We scrambled to the top, and here was a sort of inclosure, once stone-paved, but with the slabs displaced by the jungle pushing up between. Still, it was fairly open, and looking toward the bay we could see the *Moonlight* lying peacefully enough with her nose cocked up on the reef. The whaleboat we weren't able to see, the jungle hiding the beach.

In the middle of the inclosure was a small, square blockhouse, solidly built of cut stone, loopholed and battlemented all shipshape and proper, like the Dutch always do things. Simon marches us over there, we still holding hands. There was an iron door, rusty but still doing duty, and obeying Simon's orders, I kicked it open and in we went.

It was a damp, mouldy, spidery sort of place, with lizards scuttling over the walls.

The Kid came straggling up, smeared to his ears with clay, and looking like some sort of an elf or boogy. Yellow said something to him, and he went off, and a moment later came back with his arms full of green branches. He threw them into a corner and touched a match to one of the green, shiny leaves, when the stuff blazed up with a splutter, giving out a bright yellow light and a spicy smell, something like camphor.

"That's great stuff," said I. "If one o' you lads will mount guard I'll fetch in enough to last all night."

It grew dark while I was still carrying in the stuff and stacking it in the corner. Then, as we were standing around the blaze drying our clothes, we heard voices outside, and the next minute in comes another of the gang half leading, half dragging the poor old Prophet. At the door he gave the old man a shove, and I caught him in my arms and laid him down on the pile of boughs.

Never a word said the Prophet, but just sat there shivering and holding out his long, white hands to the blaze, though the place was getting so hot that the three larries went outside.

"Where's Coral?" I heard Yellow say.

The answer was a mumble I couldn't make out, but it wasn't hard for me to guess. Coral and the rest of the gang were about this time putting off to rush the ship. But what bothered me was to know the fate of Summerville and Sam.

Said I to the Prophet: "What happened the mates?"

He gave me an empty sort of stare, then began to mumble, like.

"What became of Mr. Summerville and Sam?" asks Mary, her face close to his.

"Eh?" says the old man. "They weren't with me, my dear. They weren't with me."

"Who captured you?" I asked.

He turned a blank face toward me, then seemed to recover himself.

"A man with a harpoon," says he, "while I was splitting some stones with my hammer—— He came up behind——"

"Did you see Coral?" I asked.

"The archdeacon? No. I do not want to see him!" His voice got stronger and some color came into his pale face. "He is a treacherous, cold-blooded hound! A serpent which we have nourished in our bosom! A serv-

ant of Satan." His voice got shrill. "God's curse on him!" says he.

I looked at Mary. It seemed as if the rough handling had listed the old man's head a bit. Outside the door, Yellow and the two others were muttering away, but I couldn't hear what they said. I noticed that the man who had fetched the Prophet, was carrying the harpoon that had been in the whale-boat. I gathered from this that there hadn't been guns enough to go 'round. As I was watching him, he says to Simon Yellow:

"It shtinks av fayver out here. In wid ye, lads; come in out av the doo."

So in they flocked, he with the harpoon walking to the fire, which was now a bed of glowing coals. And then, as he half turned from the heat, I got a shock that fair turned me sick. For in the dull light I saw that the shaft of the harpoon was red with blood!

Thinks I: "So that is why there was no firing! They sneaked up on the mates and beat them down before ever they could reach their rifles!"

All hands of us but the Prophet had been armed, we thinking not of Coral, but of the natives, though fearing them but little, for the district was civilized.

The heart in me sank like a dipsey lead. I'd come to think a heap of the Southerner. Always nice he was, kind and courteous and cheerful, as fine a man as ever walked a deck. He knew his business, too, did Summerville, and he had a way of getting work out of the hands and keeping discipline with never an ugly word. And old Sam was just like the big, black Newfoundland dog that guards the house, and takes care of the kids and goes out at night with the women folks, and they never safer! The salt of the earth was Sam, faithful and hard working and happy! One of God's little children, he was! A sort of old Uncle Tom!

Then, close on the grief, there rose in me a cold, murderous rage. As I looked at this low-lived thug a-warming his ugly carcass before the fire, his thick fingers like bunches of bananas from handling a slicing iron, and he playing with the shaft of the harpoon on which the blood of my two good friends was no more than dry, a wave of fury swelled up inside, nigh choking me.

But if my heart was hot then my head was cool enough. I took a careful look around. Here was the harpoon within my reach—and a whale iron was no stranger to the fist of Jasper White! Yonder in the doorway, his back turned and both hands on the muzzle of his rifle, stood Simon Yellow, staring down at the twinkling lights of the ship. The Kid was just outside, and I could hear the deep voice of him as he grumbled to his mate.

Thinks I: "One jump and the harpoon is mine and there's an end of the mut that did for Sam and Ernest! The iron shaft *he* gets, behind the two lugs of him, for if I gave him the point I might not get it out in time for Yellow. Simon, he gets the point, plum through the measly carcass of him—and then, how about the Kid? Why, Simon's rifle, of course, and nothing easier! So then, stand by now—and here goes! One—two—and a——"

Almighty! Does a man's thought ever ring the telegraph in the brain of another man? Here was I, crouched on the spice-wood brush, my muscles taut as the weather shrouds, and the legs under me tense for the spring. But even with my eye taking the gauge for the leap, the man before me whirls about with a throttled yell, the iron up—and the face of him was the face of one who turns to meet his death!

"Woof! Wha—wha—" stutters he, the short hair a-bristle and the eyes of him like the eyes of a cod. No doubt the pale flame was fair streaming from my own eyes, for one look, and back he goes into the fire, he not feeling it, and the iron shoulder high, so that I thought for the moment 'twas my end had come, not his!

Simon Yellow's rifle was up with a jerk that showed it was no new toy to him, and the Kid shoved his face around the edge of the door. And there we froze, the three of us, I sitting like a cross-legged joss with no move to me, but the hate and murder pouring out in a cold fury, like.

Simon was the first to get his voice.

"Wot's up?" he barks, like a snarling dog.

The Irishman swore as the live coals burned through the sole of his boot. He drops the iron and goes to hopping on one leg—a sight to make a man laugh.

"Murdher!" says he. "'Tis murdher, no less! I t'ought the scut was on the back o' me neck!"

"What ails ye, loony?" said I. "I ain't moved, have I?"

He hopped around, still cursing.

"'Twas plottin' murdher he was, d'ye see, Simon!" says he. "I c'u'd feel the black thoughts of him goin' t'rough me like 'twas this here harpoon! Once before I felt the like, and that was in Rangoon. And the next I felt was a crees dagger scorching up the spine o' me! I'll show ye the scar an' ye like. And that time, only for me jump, I'd not be here to show ye nothin', d'ye moind?"

"Huh!" says Simon, "ye bally schoolgirl! Gettin' hysterics and 'oppin into the fire! An' yeou a grown man, too!"

"Aw, g'wan!" says the Irishman. He gave me an ugly look. "Mind the face av 'im, Simon, the murdherin' Yank! Don't tell me it was his prayers he was a-sayin'! Get on the two fate of ye," says he. Then to Yellow: "It's the two hands av him I'll be tyin', lad—an' 'tis long ago ye sh'u'd have done that same!"

The chance was gone. Hand and foot he tied me, and that with a fistfull of marlin stuff he had in his pocket. There was no help for it, and while he was at work I wondered at the instinct of him, for he was low in the human scale, this larry was! Perhaps that was the reason!

I looked at Mary. She was sitting on the pile of brush, her back against the wall and the head of the old Prophet in her lap. The girl's face was pale, so far as I could see in the murk, but her eyes shone like Brazilian beetles, and there was a set to her square little jaw that it did me good to see.

The old man appeared to be asleep, but he looked more dead, and for the moment I thought he was, what with his jaw dropped and his closed eyes deep sunk under his fine old forehead. The Irishman gave him a curious look and crossed himself. He was going to say something, when suddenly, from the ship, came the faint sound of yells and the sudden rattle of firing!

Thinks I with a groan: "Ah, why couldn't it have come a minute before?"

Had it done so, we'd all have been free the next minute, or my name's not Jasper White! For the three larries jumped to the door and stared down, forgetful of everything but the fight going on below.

I threw a look over my shoulder at Mary. She caught my eye and gave her head an upward jerk. The Prophet stirred just then and began to mumble. Mary laid her hand on his forehead, then looked intently at me, and her lips formed some word which I could not hear. At the same instant the man with the harpoon turned to look at us. Mary stared into the coals and went on stroking the forehead of the old man.

But I saw that she wanted to tell me something. The firing down below was going on briskly, but dark as it was we could see nothing but the twinkling lights of the ship. Again I caught Mary's eye, and this time she wrinkled her forehead and gave a quick glance over her head. Mighty puzzled, I looked up, but all there was to see was the square hole in the roof—which had once taken a ladder—and a star or two, quivering in the hot air rising from the fire.

More than ever puzzled, I stared back at the girl. She jerked her head at the men in the doorway, shook it, then gave it another little upward movement.

"What is it?" I whispered, and Yellow looked around.

"Close your trap," says he, in a surly voice, "or I'll close it fer you—savvy?"

Suddenly the firing ceased, and we heard faint cries, as of people shouting back and forth. The men moved back inside, out of the dew.

"Jimmy's missed it!" growled Yellow. "Wonder w'y?"

Nobody answered. Then, says the Kid, in a bass voice that sounded mighty funny from a man of his size:

"Jimmy's a fool. He's got his girl, and he's got the old man. What for does he want to cut off the ship? That's a hangin' job, that is."

"Divil a bit!" says the stoker. "The ship's Jimmy's."

"No sich thing! The ship belongs to this here colony outfit. Jimmy ain't no more than the manager, like. It's the old man as pays."

"Then w'y don't Jimmy 'old the old bloke and the girl fer ransom, like?" asks Simon Yellow.

"Not him!" says the Kid. "Jimmy Legs ain't the boy to half do a job! He goes the whole hog, does Jimmy!"

They kept on talking Jimmy this and Jimmy that, and from all was said it was plain to me that this gang and Coral had had business dealings before. Pretty soon they fell to wrangling about whether or not Jimmy ever really intended to carry out the idea of the colony, the stoker saying that it was all a bluff and had been from the start, while Simon Yellow claimed that Jimmy was in earnest, and would have seen the thing through only for that "lop-eared Yank!" and he jerked his head at me.

There had been no more firing down below, nor could anybody tell how the business had turned out, but it seemed to be Yellow's opinion that Coral had failed.

"'E was to 'ave waved a lantern from the riggin', Jimmy was," says he, "There's been lights a-flickerin' around, but nawthin' that ye might call a real wave. No, 'e's missed it, Jimmy 'as."

I looked at Mary. She stared at me hard for a minute, then let her eyes fall on the Prophet and gave that little upward toss with her head. I took a peep at the old man and suddenly understood what she meant.

"So," thinks I, "the poor old cuss is about to slip his cable and start up aloft."

Another look at the waxy, wrinkled face and closed, sunken eyes, and there was no doubt of it. The sight sort of sent a stab through me, and the hot anger flamed up at the same time. Poor old Hubbard, to die like this, in a block-house on a savage island, and a pack of larrikins jawing and cursing and using foul talk even while he drew his last breath!

They were disputing over the chances of the pilgrims giving up the money in the safe to get back the Prophet, and whether or not Jimmy could be persuaded to give up the girl, as well, and this last was more than I could stand.

"A fat-headed bunch of pirates *you* are, and that's God's truth!" said I. "And here's your ransom money slippin' through the pearly gates before your very eyes, and you chewin' the rag like a passel o' gulls on the carcass of a whale! Bad off I am, and worse I may still be, but I'd ruther be in my boots than yours when Jimmy Legs comes back to find the old man gone aloft! He'll see some lights a-wavin' then, this Simon Yellow will!"

That fetched 'em up all standing. They went and leaned over the old man and asked each other what to do, and swore and wanted to chafe his hands, but nary one would Mary leave near him. With her blue eyes flashing fire she waved them back. The Prophet looked to be dying; for that matter, he looked to be dead, and you could scarcely see the breathing of him, it was that slow and shallow. The three, mighty troubled in their minds, went back to the door to look out over the bay again, and, as he passed me, Yellow leaned down, and, in sheer spite and cussedness, struck me between the eyes with his fist.

"There!" says he. "That for you, me buck—and keep your tongue in your teeth, savvy?"

The force of the blow knocked me on my back, and I lay there for a minute, nigh choked with rage. Mary had made a little gurgle in her throat when Yellow struck me, but that was all.

Back they came to the fire again, and for a while everybody sat silent. I was lying on my side on the sweet, spicy-smelling brush, and when pres-

ently the Kid threw a fresh bough on the fire, for the night was getting damp and chilly, I turned my head and watched the smoke swirl up through the square hole in the roof.

I was thinking of the mate and how he had met his death, and wondering if perhaps I might not soon be sent to meet him, for I thought it likely that with the Prophet dead, his men would force Coral to give up the girl, then and there. So you can imagine the turn it gave me when, staring through the square black hole, I looked suddenly straight into the face of Summerville!

It was the mate, no doubt of that, and the face that I saw was just as it would have been, and he just killed! Pale and ghastly in the glare of the camphor wood, a bloody gash across the forehead, and the teeth white and shining under his drooping, blood-fouled mustache.

I'm not superstitious—for a sailor, that is, but I might as well own up the sight was too much for me, and I all tautlike at the time. A yell burst out of me that fairly shook the hut, and it stone, and the three in front of the fire echoed it, jumping to their feet and that scared and shaken that if only I'd been free I could have done for the lot! No doubt they thought it was a sort of farewell from the flittin' soul of the old Prophet, and the sight of him made certain of it, for there he was, bolt upright, and eyes staring, roused so sudden by my whoop.

"Wha—wha—what's that?" says the stoker, his teeth chattering like dice.

I glanced at Mary, and saw her frown and shake her head in a furious sort of way. A'mighty—and then of a sudden I understood. Here on the roof of the blockhouse was Summerville himself, and not his ghost! Summerville that I'd given up as murdered and made quite sure of it, and for no reason in the world beyond that I'd seen some blood on the shaft of the harpoon.

"Send for the fool killer!" said I to myself. "Will I never learn any sense?" It was about Summerville that Mary had been trying all this time to make me understand, shaping his name with her lips, and jerking her head to the roof! And the Prophet was no more dying than she was! In fact, he looked a whole lot better for his nap! And he'd looked better yet if I hadn't waked him when I thought I saw a ghost!

But Simon Yellow had got over his shock and was staring at me out of his cruel little eyes of a hog.

"My Gord!" says he, between his teeth, "and what in hell ails *you* that you sings out like that?"

"Somethin' in this here brush stung me," says I, "a scorpion, likely."

"Ho!" says he, "a scorpion, was it? Somethin' stung you, says you, so you gets a-screamin' spell—to tell your mates that's landed, maybe, where you're puttin' up fer the night! H'Im on to yeou, me duck! Becuz Mike here gits the hystrikes yeou think you'll git 'em, too! My Gord! Somethin' 'as got to be done to frottle this 'ere h'epidemic, or me an' the Kid we'll be 'avin a sobbin' spell! 'Somethin' stung me!' says 'e! I'll sting ye, yeou blighter!" And with that, he starts in to kick me.

I heard a gurgling scream from Mary, and the next minute she was on her feet and struggling with Yellow, fighting tooth and nail, and he with his hands full, for she was a strong girl, Mary was.

No doubt, he would have struck her but for fear of Coral. Instead, he backed toward the door, when Mary turned toward me. But at this, the two others grabbed her by the shoulders, Yellow snatching at her wrists, and the sight of the three of them mauling the girl about was more than I could stand.

The muscles of my legs leaped taut as a spring line, and I felt the lashings give. Another kick and my feet were free, when up I jumped, straining at my wrists, but the strands that bound them were too many and too strong.

Mary was fighting like a tigress. The men were cursing and getting rougher every second. Then Yellow flung his arm around her neck, getting a choking hold; and mad with fury at the sight I drove into him, headfirst, knocking him over against the wall.

At this, the Kid loosed his hold of the girl, and, picking up his rifle, struck me across the left upper arm with the barrel, and I heard the bone snap like a dry stick.

He was just about to strike again, at my head, this time, when a long, fluttering figure dropped through the scuttle in the roof, landing full in the fire and sending the embers flying in all directions. A firebrand flew into the boughs of campor wood, or eucalyptus, or whatever the stuff was, and it blazed up like celluloid, flashing and sputtering with a brilliant white flame.

It's hard to tell just what happened next; all was so quick and furious and confused, but the first I knew, Mary was dragging me out of the flames, and here was a snarling, strangling mass of arms and legs and bodies writhing over the floor.

Then out of the scrimmage flashed a knife, weaving back and forth, uncertain where to strike. It rested for an instant on the ground, and seeing that the fist which held it was not the mate's, I set my heel on it, like it had been the head of a snake. The knife flew wide, and Mary whipped it up and slashed through the marlin that held my wrists.

The whole place was now a roaring mass of fire, and scarcely clear of the blaze struggled the four, coiled into each other like snakes in the early spring. To one side lay the harpoon, and I picked it up and danced about looking for a chance to strike; but the mate's six feet five seemed woven all through the mess. Then, all at once, out shoots one of his long, skinny arms, the fingers hooked like the claw of an eagle.

"A knife!" he pants, and Mary slipped it into his hand. Then suddenly she turns to me with a scream.

"The Prophet!" cries she, and would have dived headfirst into the fire if I hadn't flung her back. So help me, I'd clean forgot the old man, and the place was small and the fire all across it. With the harpoon I swept the blazing stuff aside, then flung down the iron and rushed back to find the Prophet huddled in the far corner, clear of the fire, but nigh suffocated from the smoke and heat. I got him to the door, and just as I did so a man scrambled to his feet and leaped across the threshold.

It was Yellow, and, acting on instinct, I grabbed up the harpoon and made for him. Seeing the weapon, he turned to run, speeding straight down the lane of light from the door, and with that I up and threw.

It was a lovely dart, if I do say it myself that shouldn't, but then, it was my proper trade! Just the least bit of a curve, flashing in the glare like a tongue of red flame, went the harpoon, and found a billet square between the shoulders of the flying man. Yellow squalled like a man as the point bit deep. Just the one howl, for I knew the trick of putting weight in the iron to bury it clean to the hitches. Only the one scream he gave, did Simon Yellow, then down he went and spun around in the rank weeds.

"There's 'fin out' for you, blast you, and no flurry worth speakin' of!" I said, and turned into the door, and here was the mate, burned and black, lying across the threshold panting and covered with blood, and under him the stoker, the knife buried to the hilt in his ribs and his mouth wide open—and back a piece was the Kid, his head in the fire and he not minding it!

Summerville looked up at me and blinked.

"Did y'all git him, cap?" says he.

"He's shipped along of his mates," I answered.

"Good—good!" His eyes strayed over to the Prophet, who had sunk against the wall.

"I won't say, Brother Hubbard," says Summerville, "that all of this yeah trouble is the result of pe'vertin' the Holy Scriptures, seh—but I will say——"

"Hush, Mr. Summerville," Mary interrupted, "don't you see he's badly shaken?"

"Youall are right," says Summerville, and scrambled to his feet. "Captain, what's to do now?"

"Where's Sam?" I asked.

"Abo'd the ship. Me an' Sam were

investigatin' the sides of this yeah gully leadin' to the fo't when we heard voices, and concealed ouahselves in the rocks jes' as Coral an' his gang passed by. Realizin' the danger to the ship if they should get the boat, we tried to make a detour and get theah fi'st, but this attempt was f'ustrated, owin' to the thickness of the jungle. As it was, we arrived at the edge of the scrub jes' in time to see Coral post his men so as to shoot down anybody crossin' the beach, they not wantin' to show theahselves fo' fear of bein' discovered f'om the ship."

"Yes," said I, "go on."

"Me an' Sam," goes on the mate, "then flipped up a quateh to see which of us should swim off to the ship, this task bein' onpleasant, owin' to the sharks. Sam lost, but got theah without bein et, as he dipped a lantern f'om the stern, that bein' the signal agreed on. As soon as I saw that, I waited until Coral and his gang had emba'ked, then found my way heah in the dark, gettin' some tore up doin' it."

"How did you know that we were here?" asked Mary.

"I p'esumed it, Coral and his crowd havin' come down this gully, which evidently led to the fo't. Arrivin' heah, I clum' up on the roof to reconnoitre. Miss Ma'y saw me and tried to make y'all aware of my presence. I was anxious that yo' should unde'stand the situation befo' commencin' the attack. But when they started that rough and tumble, theah was no longer any choice but to drap down, y'all bein' so sna'led up I dassent shoot. Why was y'all so scairt-like on seein' me?"

I felt my face getting hot. "I thought that this Mick had killed you," said I. "There was blood on the harpoon. I thought it was yours, so when you stuck your head through the scuttle——"

"I see," says Summerville. "Most natchul. The question now is, what shall we do?"

"Since Sam got out there in time to warn our people," said I, "the chances are that they let the boat get within range, and then cut loose, and slaughtered the whole crew. No doubt they'll be in looking for us, come daylight. The best thing for us is to make ourselves comfortable here for the rest of the night. We'd break our necks getting down to the beach in the dark, and might walk onto a snake, or something of the sort. Besides, the old man ain't fit to travel."

The others agreed, so we took the stoker and the Kid by the heels and dragged them to the moat and tumbled them in, then gathered some more fuel both to sleep on and to burn. In one corner of the blockhouse we found the water breaker and biscuit tin brought up from the boat by the gang when they landed. We needed food badly, having had no sleep for two nights, and no supper.

The Prophet ate a little and went off into a doze. Then I told them that my arm was broken, and Mary made an awful fuss, she and Summerville finally managing to set it and fish the bone with sticks, and bandage torn from Mary's skirt. Then Summerville insisted on my taking a nap while he mounted guard at the door.

When I awoke, the gray light of the dawn was stealing into the place, and here was Summerville, still on watch, leaning against the wall and munching a biscuit.

"Dern you!" said I, speaking in a whisper, so as not to rouse Mary. "Why didn't you wake me?"

Summerville yawned. "They wa'ant no need; besides, y'all are wounded."

Mary woke up at the sound of his voice, and the Georgian stepped outside while I wished her good morning. When we came to look at the Prophet we found that the old man was in a bad way, he being hot with fever and we unable to rouse him.

I called in Summerville, and we decided that as the Prophet would have to be carried down on a stretcher, and I was not much use with my broken wing, the best plan would be for him to go and reconnoitre, and if the coast was clear, signal to the ship.

There was a chance, of course, that Coral and his crew might be somewhere

about the beach, and it was even possible that they had captured the vessel, but this last didn't seem likely, our people having been warned. My opinion was, and Summerville agreed with me, that they'd been allowed to get close aboard, and then wiped out to a man!

At any rate, we couldn't stop where we were, with nothing but a half tin of biscuits and the Prophet off his head with fever, so Summerville picked up his rifle, stalked across the weed-choked parade ground, he looking like a thin gray ghost in the early dawn, and disappeared.

The brush fire was out and we had no matches, so Mary and I sat close together, not saying a word, but shaken now and then by a shiver from the dampness and the waiting and the lack of a good cup of hot coffee! Ague-like chills they were, the sort that rattle your teeth and tighten the muscles of your jaw.

Down below, the bay was hid by mist, thin and flat and blue as cigar smoke in a still room; but, even as we watched, the light grew stronger and began to turn from gray to cream and from cream to rose.

A babboon coughed from somewhere about the walls; then the birds began to sing, as if at a given signal, and the chill went out of the air. Up popped the sun, and here came the ship out of the mist; first her trucks, the tops, funnel, then the whole of her, she still roosting, of course, on the reef.

The Prophet roused up and asked for a drink of water. Mary went to get the boat breaker, and as she did so a rifle shot rang out. Close after it came two more, so near together that I knew they couldn't be from the one piece. Then silence, and the birds began to sing like all possessed.

I guess our faces were pretty white as we stared at each other. Then Mary gave the old man his drink as quietly as though nothing had happened, and, coming over to me, dropped beside me on the threshold and slipped her arms about my neck. Neither of us said a word, but we were both thinking the same thought—that Summerville had been shot down from the bush!

For some time we sat there in silence, Mary with her cheek laid against my own. Then, in the growing light on the bay, I saw a boat put off from the ship and head in for the beach.

"Now for the last act," said I. "Here come our friends. If only we can hold this place for a few minutes, Mary, we will be all right. But unless I'm much mistaken we'll be seeing some of the enemy mighty soon." And I got onto my feet, swung shut the iron door, and shoved the muzzle of a rifle into one of the loopholes.

Without a word, Mary picked up another of the rifles, buckled on a cartridge belt, and stepped to the loophole opposite. She hadn't grown up on a ranch in an Indian country for nothing, Mary Ketcham hadn't.

There wasn't long to wait. The old bridge once used to cross the moat had long since rotted out, and the easiest way to the inclosure was where the retaining wall had caved into the moat—the way we had come. This was opposite the door, not fifty yards distant.

As we waited, up through this gap came the head and shoulders of a man. Climbing on all fours, he was, and as I watched him over the barrel of the rifle he reached the top, and heaving himself unsteadily onto his legs, came lurching forward. For some reason I held my fire. There was no hurry. His life lay on the tip of my finger.

As he pushed ahead where the growth was less thick, I saw that it was John Coral. A blood-soaked bandage was around his head and another around his thigh, just above the knee, and the front of his shirt was blood-stained, too. One arm swung limp, and in the other he carried his rifle, holding it by the muzzle and using it for a staff.

On he came, lurching as if to fall with each short, halting step. He reached the body of Simon Yellow, sprawled out on its face in the weeds and the harpoon sticking up between his shoulders. Coral stopped and stared at it in a stupid sort of way. He was

almost to the door, and I could see his face work as he swayed back and forth like a drunken man, his eyes fastened on the corpse.

My rifle still covered him, but I couldn't somehow bring myself to press the trigger, nor was there any need, for all at once his knees buckled under him, he flung out his arms, and the rifle went spinning to one side. Then down he dropped across the body on the ground.

We waited, but no one else appeared. Coral raised himself a little and sat with his back bent forward, his great shoulders drooping and his eyes rolling from side to side. Like a big chimpanzee, or orang-outang he looked, John Coral did, and there was something sort of pitiful about him, too.

"John Coral—John Coral!" I called.

His back curved still more and his chin was shoved up.

"Who's that?" says he, in a deep, quavering voice.

"It's Jasper White," I answered. "Where's the rest o' your gang?"

"In hell!" says he. Then, in a weaker voice: "Come out here, White. I can't do ye no hurt; I'm a dyin' man."

I turned to Mary. "Stay here," said I, "and keep the gap covered." I kicked open the iron door and went out. One look at Coral showed that he was up to no tricks this time. Death was creeping across his face like the shadow of a black thunderhead.

"Where's Mary?" says he.

"Inside."

"Fetch her out. There's no danger. Only Jimmy left—and he goin' fast."

But Mary had heard and out she came. Coral looked up at her, but I doubt that he saw her, for there was a filmlike, spreading over his eyes.

"My dear," says he, "will you forgive me?"

"Yes," she answered, in a low voice.

"Ah!" says he, in a sort of a whimper, "but you don't know for what I want your forgiveness. When you know——"

"What happened out there?" I interrupted.

He stared up at me stupidly, and I asked the question again. It was plain that he was going fast. Then the words came with a sort of gush, as if he doubted he'd have time to finish.

"We put off in the boat—the ten of us—when it got dark. Meant to cut off the ship, savvy? Five of us in sight, five lyin' in the bottom—and no one hailed us. Then, close alongside came —*hell!* The flame in our faces, a'most —twenty-five yards at the outside! I saw it was no good, and was overboard and swum for it, and me shot in three places. But I'm a strong man. A very strong man—there ain't many could ha' done it—not many——" His voice got thin and mumbling, and his eyelids flickered.

"Then what?" I asked sharply.

"Lay all night back o' the beach, and come daylight I started up here. Then I met the mate, and he shot me, and lef' me for dead—all hands shootin' at him—poor Jimmy Legs!"

He gave a sob and his body began to rock in a queer, circular way, swinging from the waist. The tears gushed out of his bulging eyes.

"And the mate?" I asked.

"The mate?" He stared at me. "Oh —the mate—to *hell* with the mate!" says John Coral. His eyes opened wide, then down he went, stone dead, across the body of Simon Yellow.

A shout rang out from the gully, and here was Summerville, and at his heels Sam and half a dozen of the pilgrims. But it struck me that their faces were mighty long for a rescue party, and I was quick to know the reason, for the doctor drew me to one side.

"Ketcham was killed last night," says he.

"*Ketcham!*" I gasped.

"Yes. They fired one volley from the boat. Ketcham was killed, and Hazelfield will die, and there are three badly wounded." He jerked his head toward Mary. "Wait until she gets aboard," says he, and strode toward the blockhouse.

The rest of the yarn is soon told. We were a week getting the ship off. Then

we went up to Hongkong to go into the dock before starting on the homeward voyage, for there was no longer any thought of a colony.

Mary took the death of her father like the brave girl she was. The wounded men recovered, but it was plain to all hands that the days of the Prophet were numbered. The old man had been roughly handled, and the shock to his nervous system had been severe, but it wasn't that which brought about his end. It was the constant thought that he was to blame for all that had happened, and that what we'd been through was a sort of visitation of the Almighty as a result of his having tampered with the Holy Word.

Summerville's suggestion came home to roost with the old man, and the mate was cut up about it something dreadful and spent most of his time in trying to persuade the Prophet that it wasn't so. But the old man would only shake his head and quote those verses in Revelations about the wickedness of taking away and adding to any parts of the Book of Life.

When we got to Hongkong it was plain that the end was near. The Prophet knew it as well as anybody else, and one day he got a couple of British colonial lawyers aboard and drew up a new will. A week later he passed quietly away, and then we learned for the first time that he had left his entire fortune, something like three and a half millions of dollars, to be divided equally amongst the members of his flock, with instructions to return to the "True and Unaltered Word."

Separate legacies were left to Mary and her mother and to the family of Hazelfield, the other man killed. To me he left a full share, and in addition to that the good old man bequeathed the ship with all belonging to her, to be owned in equally by Summerville, Sam, and myself. And nobody begrudged that behest!

So Mary and I made the return voyage in the owner's cabin, which had been done over into as bright and pretty a nest for a bride as one might wish to see. And if we sometimes forgot ourselves a little and were happier than perhaps we ought to have been—well, I don't believe that Ketcham or the Prophet looking down from aloft resented it any. And it was gay all over the ship. All hands had voyaged out full of doubt and fear and uncertainty, and here we came home with a mighty bright future, some families being actually rich, as men, women, and children shared and shared alike.

As for Mary and myself—well, that's a subject that only begins, like, where this yarn fetches up!

Two weeks hence, in the first May number, you will get a long complete novel by ***Francis Lynde, author of "The Fire Bringers."***

PARSON PEERS

NO fewer than ten English clergymen are heirs to peerages. In every case they were younger sons put into the church for a career when there was no expectation of their being the head of the family. Their elder brothers died, and the succession fell to them.

Many sons of the British nobility enter the church, but few attain distinction. Only one, Lord Alwyne Compton, has become a bishop. He holds the see of Ely.

The late Earl of Devon was one of the most able of clergymen peers, and the present Marquis of Normanby is a well-known wearer of broadcloth. His lordship, previous to his recent marriage, used to have a preparatory school for Eton at Mulgrave Castle.

Sir Borrodaile Savory is one of the most eminent of baronet clergymen.

Going Some

By Rex Beach

Author of "The Spoilers," "The Barrier," "Told in the Storm," Etc.

You know Rex Beach and his work, "The Spoilers" and "The Barrier." We told you that we'd have a novel by him, and here it is—the best and funniest story he has ever written. There's a laugh on every page! It's a story of the West, full of excitement and go—but through it all runs this broad stream of humor that makes you want to read every word in it. Seldom has a man voluntarily put himself in such a screamingly funny predicament as young Wallingford Speed, a "near-champion" athlete who poses as an inter-collegiate runner. Rex Beach's description of his frantic efforts to escape from his embarrassing situation will keep you laughing from start to finish.

OUR cowboys inclined their bodies over the long barbed-wire fence which marked the dividing line between the Centipede ranch and their own, staring mournfully into a summer night such as only the far Southwestern country knows. Big, yellow stars hung thick and low, so low that it seemed they might almost be plucked by an upstretched hand, and a silent air blew across thousands of open miles of land, lying crisp and fragrant under the velvet dark.

And as the four inclined their bodies, they inclined, also, their ears, after the strained manner of listeners who feel anguish at what they hear. A voice, shrill and human, pierced the night like a needle; then, with a wail of a tortured soul, died away amid discordant raspings—the voice of a phonograph.

It was their own, or had been until one overconfident day when the Flying Heart ranch had risked it as a wager in a foot race with the neighboring Centipede, and their man had been too slow. As it had been their pride, it remained their disgrace. Dearly had they loved, and dearly lost it. It meant something that looked like honor, and though there were ten thousand thousand phonographs, in all the world there was not one that could take its place.

The sound ceased, there was an approving distant murmur of men's voices, and then the song began:

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Lift up your voice and sing——"

Higher and higher, the voice mounted, until it reached again its first thin, ear-splitting pitch.

"Still Bill" Stover stirred uneasily in the darkness.

"Why 'n 'ell don't they keep her wound up?" he complained. "Gallagher's got the soul of a wart hog. It's criminal the way he massacrees that hymn."

From a rod farther down the wire fence, Willie answered him, in a boy's falsetto:

"I wonder if he does it to spite me?"

"He don't know you're here," said Stover.

Willie came out of the gloom, a lit-

tle, stoop-shouldered man, with spectacles.

"I ain't no ways sure," he piped, peering up at his lanky foreman. "Why do you reckon he allus lets Mrs. Melby peter out on my favorite reecord? He done the same thing last night. It looks like an insult."

"It's nothing but ignorance," Stover replied. "He don't want no trouble with you. None of 'em do."

"I'd like to know, for certain." The small man seemed torn by doubt. "If I only knew he done it a-purpose, I'd git him. I bet I could do it from here."

Stover's voice was gruff, as he commanded:

"Forget it! Ain't it bad enough for us fellers to hang around like this every night, without advertising our idiocy by a gun play?"

"They ain't got no right to that phonograph," Willie averred darkly.

"Oh, yes, they have; they won it fair and square."

"Fair and square! Do you mean to say Humpy Joe run that foot race on the square?"

"I never said nothin' like that, whatever. I mean we bet it, and we lost it. Listen! There goes Carara's piece!"

Out past the corral floated the announcement, in a man's metallic syllables:

"'The Baggage Coach Ahead,' as sung by Helena Mora, for the Echo Phonograph, of New York and Pa-a-aris!"

From the dusk, to the right of the two listeners, now issued soft Spanish phrases.

"Madre de Dios! 'The Baggage Car in Front!' T'adora Mora! God bless 'er!"

During the rendition of this affecting ballad, the two cow men remained draped uncomfortably over the barbed-wire barrier, lost in rapturous enjoyment. When the last note had died away, Stover roused himself reluctantly.

"It's time we was turnin' in." He called softly: "Hey, Mex!"

"*Si*, señor!"

"Come on, you and Cloudy. *Vamos!* It's ten o'clock."

He turned his back on the Centipede ranch, that housed the treasure, and, in company with Willie, made his way to the ponies. Two other figures joined them, one humming, in a musical barytone, the strains of the song just ended.

"Cut that out, Mex! They'll hear us," Stover cautioned.

"*Carramba!* This t'ing is bre'k my 'eart," said the Mexican sadly. "It seem like the Señorita Mora is sing that song to me. Mebbe she knows I'm set out 'ere on cactus an' listen to her. Ah, I love that señorita, ver' much."

The little man with the glasses began to swear in his high falsetto. His ear had caught the phonograph operator in another musical mistake.

"That horn' toad let Mrs. Melby die again to-night," said he. "It's sure comin' to a runnacaboo between him and me. If somebody don't kill him pretty soon, he'll wear out that machine before we git it back."

"Humph! It don't look like we'd ever get it back," said Stover.

One of the four sighed audibly; then, vaulting into his saddle, went loping away.

"Cloudy's sore because they didn't play 'Navajo,'" said Willie. "Well, I don't blame 'em none for omittin' that war dance. It ain't got the class of them other pieces. While it's devised to suit the intellect of an Injun, perhaps, it ain't in the runnin' with 'The Holy City,' which tune is the sweetest and sacredest ever sung."

Carara paused, with a hand upon the neck of his cayuse.

"Eet is not so fine as 'The Baggage Car in Front,'" he declared.

"It's got it beat a mile!" Willie flashed back harshly.

"Here, you!" exclaimed Stover. "No arguments. We all have our favorites, and it ain't up to no individual to force his likes and dislikes down no other feller's throat." The two men he addressed mounted their bronchos stiffly.

"I repeat, 'The Holy City,' as sung by Mrs. Melby, is the swellest tune that ever hit these parts."

Carara muttered something in Spanish which the others could not understand.

"They're all fine pieces," Stover observed placatingly, when fairly out of hearing of the ranch houses. "You boys have each got your preference. Cloudy, bein' an Injun, has got his, and I rise to state that I like that monologue, 'Silas on Fifth Avenoo' better than all of 'em, which ain't nothin' ag'inst my judgment nor yours. When Silas says, 'The girl opened her valise, took out her purse, closed her valise, opened her purse, took out a dime, closed her purse, opened her valise, put in her purse, closed her valise, give the dime to the conductor, got a nickel in change, then opened her valise, took out her purse, closed her valise——'" Stover began to rock in his saddle, then burst into a loud guffaw, followed by his companions. "Gosh! That's awful funny!"

"*Si! Si!*" acknowledged Carara, his white teeth showing through the gloom.

"An' it's just like a fool woman," tittered Willie. "That's sure one ridic'lous line of talk."

"Still Bill" wiped his eyes with the back of a bony hand. "I know that hull monologue by heart, but I can't never get past that spot, to save my soul. Right there I bog down, complete." Again he burst into wild laughter, followed by his companions. "I don't see how folks can be so dam' funny," he gasped.

"It's natural to 'em, like warts," said Willie; "they're born with it, the same as I was born to shoot straight with either hand, and the same as the Mex was born to throw a rope. He don't know how he does it, and neither do I. Some folks can say funny things, some can sing, like Missus Melby; some can run foot races, like that Centipede cook——"

Carara breathed an eloquent Mexican oath.

"Do you reckon he fixed that race with Humpy Joe?" inquired Stover.

"Name's Skinner," Willie observed. "It sure sounds bad."

"I'm sorry Humpy left us so sudden," said "Still Bill." "We'd ought to have questioned him. If we only had proof that the race was crooked we'd——"

"You can go gamble it was crooked," the little man averred. "Them Centipede fellers never done nothin' on the square. They got Humpy Joe and fixed it for him to lose, so they could get that talkin' machine. That's why he pulled out."

"I'd hate to think it," said the foreman gloomily; then, after a moment, during which the only sound was that of the muffled hoofbeats, "Well, what we goin' to do about it?"

"Humph! I've laid awake nights, figurin' that out. I reckon we'll just have to git another foot racer, and beat Skinner. He ain't the fastest in the world."

"That takes coin. We're broke."

"Mebbe Mr. Chapin would lend a helpin' hand."

"No chance!" said Stover grimly. "He's sore on foot racin'. Says it disturbs us and upsets our equalubrium."

Carara fetched a deep sigh.

"It's ver' bad t'ing, señor. I don' feel no worse w'en my gran'mother die."

The three men loped onward through the darkness, weighted heavily with disappointment.

Affairs at the Flying Heart ranch were not all to Jack Chapin's liking. Ever since that memorable foot race, more than a month before, a gloom had brooded over the place, which even the presence of two Smith College girls, not to mention that of Mr. Fresno, was unable to dissipate.

The cowboys moped about like melancholy shades, and neglected their work to discuss the disgrace that had fallen upon them.

It was a task to get any of them out in the morning. Several had quit, the rest were quarreling among themselves, and the bunk house had already been the scene of more than one encounter, altogether too sanguinary to have originated from such a trivial cause as a foot race.

It was not exactly an auspicious atmosphere in which to entertain a houseful of college boys and girls, all unversed in the ways of the West.

The master of the ranch sought his sister Jean, to tell her frankly what was on his mind.

"See here, sis," he began, "I don't want to cast a cloud over your little house party, but I think you'd better keep your friends away from my men."

"Why, what is the matter?" she demanded.

"Things are at a pretty high tension just now, and the boys have had two or three rows among themselves. Yesterday Fresno tried to 'kid' Willie about 'The Holy City'; said it was written as a coon song, and wasn't sung in good society. If he hadn't been a guest, I guess Willie would have murdered him."

"Oh, Jack! You won't let Willie murder anybody, not even Berkeley, while the people are here, will you?" coaxed Miss Chapin anxiously.

"What made you invite Berkeley Fresno, anyhow?" was the rejoinder. "This is no gilded novelty to him. He is a Western man."

Miss Chapin numbered her reasons sagely. "In the first place—Helen. Then there had to be enough men to go around. Last and best, he is the most adorable man I ever saw at a house party. He's an angel at breakfast, sings perfectly beautifully—you know he was on the Stanford Glee Club."

"Humph!" Jack was unimpressed. "If you roped him for Helen Blake to brand, why have you sent for Wally Speed?"

"Well, you see, Berkeley and Helen didn't quite hit it off, and Mr. Speed is—a friend of Culver's." Miss Chapin blushed prettily.

"Oh, I see! I thought myself that this affair had something to do with you and Culver Covington, but I didn't know it had lapsed into a sort of matrimonial round-up. Suppose Miss Blake shouldn't care for Speed after he gets here?"

"Oh, but she will. That's where Berkeley Fresno comes in. When two men begin to fight for her, she'll have to begin to form a preference, and I'm sure she will like Wally Speed. Don't you see?"

The brother looked at his sister shrewdly. "It seems to me you learned a lot at Smith."

Jean tossed her head. "How absurd! That sort of knowledge is perfectly natural for a girl to have." Then she teased: "But you admit that my selection of a chaperon was excellent, don't you, Jack?"

"Mrs. Keap and I are the best of friends," Jack averred, with supreme dignity. "I'm not in the market, and a man doesn't marry a widow, anyhow. It's too old and experienced a beginning."

"Nonsense! Roberta Keap is only twenty-three. Why, she hardly knew her husband, even! It was one of those sudden, impulsive affairs that would overwhelm any girl who hadn't seen a man for four years. And then he enlisted in the Spanish War, and was killed."

"Considerate chap!"

"Roberta, you know, is my best friend, after Helen. Do be nice to her, Jack," Miss Chapin sighed. "It is too bad the others couldn't come."

"Yes, a small house party has its disadvantages. By the way, what's that gold thing on your frock?"

"It's a medal. Culver sent it to me."

"Another?"

"Yes, he won the intercollegiate championship again." Miss Chapin proudly extended the emblem on its ribbon.

"I wish to goodness Covington had been here to take Humpy Joe's place," said the young cattle man, as he turned it over. "The boys are just broken-hearted over losing that phonograph."

"I'll get him to run and win it back," Jean offered easily.

Her brother laughed. "Take my advice, sis, and don't let Culver mix up in this game! The stakes are too high. I think that Centipede cook is a professional runner, myself; and if our boys were beaten again—well, you and

mother and I would have to move out of New Mexico, that's all. No, we'd better let the memory of that defeat die out as quickly as possible. You warn Fresno not to joke about it any more, and I'll take Mrs. Keap off your hands. She may be a widow, she may even be the chaperon, but I'll do it; I will do it," promised Jack; "for my sister's sake."

II.

Helen Blake was undeniably bored. The sultry afternoon was very long—longer even than Berkeley Fresno's autobiography, and quite as dry. It was too hot and dusty to ride, so she took refuge in the latest "best seller" and sought out a hammock on the vine-shaded gallery, where Jean Chapin was writing letters, while the disconsolate Fresno, banished, wandered at large, vaguely injured at her lack of appreciation.

Absent-mindedly, the girls dipped into the box of bonbons between them. Jean finished her correspondence, and essayed conversation, but her companion's blonde head was bowed over the book in her lap, and the effort met with no response.

Lulled by the somniferous droning of insects and lazy echoes from afar, Miss Chapin was on the verge of slumber when she saw her guest rapidly turn the last pages of her novel, then, with a chocolate between her teeth, read wide-eyed to the finish.

Miss Blake closed the book reluctantly, uncurled slowly, then stared out through the dancing heat waves, her blue eyes shadowed with romance.

"Did she marry him?" queried Jean.

"No, no!" Helen Blake sighed blissfully. "It was infinitely finer. She killed herself."

"I like to see them get married."

"Naturally. You are at that stage. But I think suicide is more glorious, in many cases."

Miss Chapin yawned openly. "Speaking of suicides, isn't this ranch the deadest place?"

"Oh, I don't think so." Miss Blake picked her way fastidiously through the bonbons, nibbling tentatively at several before making her choice.

"Oh, yes, you do, and you needn't be polite just because you're a guest."

"Well, then, to be as truthful as a boarder, it *is* a little dull. Not for our chaperon, though. The time doesn't seem to drag on her hands. Jack certainly is making it pleasant for her."

"If you call taking her out to watch a lot of bellowing calves get branded entertainment," Miss Chapin sighed.

"I wonder what makes widows so fascinating?" observed the youthful Miss Blake.

"I hope I never find out." Jean clutched nervously at the gold medal on her dress. "Wouldn't that be dreadful?"

"My dear, Culver seems perfectly healthy. Why worry?"

"I—I wish he was here."

Miss Blake leaned forward, and read the inscription on her companion's medal. "Oh, isn't it heavy?" feeling it reverently.

"Pure gold, like himself! You should have seen him when he won it. Why, at the finish of that race, all the men but Culver were making the most horrible faces. They were simply *dead*."

Miss Blake's hands were clasped in her lap. "They all make faces," said she. "Have you told Roberta about your engagement?"

"No! She doesn't dream of it, and I don't want her to know. I'm so afraid she'll think, now that mother has gone, that I asked her here just as a chaperon. Perhaps I'll tell her when Culver comes."

"I adore athletes. I wouldn't give a cent for a man who wasn't athletic."

"Does Mr. Speed go in for that sort of thing?"

"Rather! The day we met at the Yale games he had medals all over him, and that night at the dance he used the most wonderful athletic language. We could scarcely understand him. Mr. Covington must have told you all about him; they are chums, you know."

Miss Chapin furrowed her brows meditatively.

"I have heard Culver speak of him,

but never as an athlete. Have you and Mr. Speed settled things between you? I mean, has he—said anything?"

Miss Blake flushed.

"Not exactly." She adjusted a cushion, to cover her confusion, then leaned back complacently. "But he has stuttered dangerously several times."

A musical tinkle of silver spurs sounded in the distance, and around the corner of the cook house opposite came Carara, the Mexican, his wide, spangled sombrero tipped rakishly over one ear, a corn-husk cigarette drooping from his lips.

Evidently his presence was inspired by some special motive, for he glanced sharply about, and, failing to detect the two girls behind the distant screen of vines, removed his cigarette, and whistled thrice, like a quail; then, leaning against the adobe wall, curled his black, silken mustaches to needle points.

"It's that romantic Spaniard!" whispered Helen. "What does he want?"

"It's his afternoon call on Mariedetta, the maid," said Jean. "They meet there twice a day, morning and afternoon."

"A lover's tryst!" breathed Miss Blake eagerly. "Isn't he graceful and picturesque? Can we watch them?"

"'S-sh! There she comes!"

From the opposite direction appeared a slim, swarthy Mexican girl, an Indian water jug balanced upon her shoulders. She was clad in the straight-hanging native garment, belted in with a sash; her feet were in sandals, and she moved as silently as a shadow.

During the four days since Miss Blake's arrival at the Flying Heart ranch she had seen Mariedetta flitting noiselessly here and there, but had never heard her speak. The pretty, expressionless face beneath its straight, black hair had ever retained its wooden stolidity, the velvety eyes had neither laughed nor frowned nor sparkled. She seemed to be merely a part of this far Southwestern picture; a bit of inanimate, yet breathing, local color.

Now, however, the girl dropped her jug, and, with a low cry, glided to her lover, who tossed aside his cigarette, and took her in his arms. From this distance their words were indistinguishable.

"How perfectly romantic!" said the Eastern girl breathlessly. "I had no idea Mariedetta could love anybody."

"She is a volcano," Jean answered.

"Why, it's like a play!"

"And it goes on all the time."

"How gentle and sweet he is! I think he is charming. He is not at all like the other cowboys, is he?"

While the two witnesses of the scene were eagerly discussing it, Joy, the Chinese cook, emerged from the kitchen, bearing a bucket of water, his presence hidden from the lovers by the corner of the building.

Carara languidly released his inamorata from his embrace, and lounged out of sight around the building, pausing at the farther corner to waft her a graceful kiss from the ends of his fingers, as, with a farewell flash of his white teeth, he disappeared.

Mariedetta recovered her water jug, and glided onward into the court in front of the cook house, her face mask-like, her movements deliberate, as usual.

Joy, spying the girl, grinned at her. She tossed her head coquettishly, and her step slackened, whereupon the cook, with a sly glance around, tapped her gently on the arm, and said:

"Nice l'il gally."

"The idea!" indignantly exclaimed Miss Blake from her hammock.

But Mariedetta was not offended. Instead she smiled over her shoulder, as she had smiled at her lover an instant before.

"Me like you fine. You like pie?" Joy nodded toward the door to the culinary department, as if to make free of his hospitality, at the instant Carara, who had circled the building, came into view from the opposite side, a fresh cigarette between his lips.

His languor vanished at the first glimpse of the scene, and he strode toward the white-clad Celestial, who dove through the open door like a prairie dog into its hole. Carara followed at his heels.

"It serves him right!" cried Miss Blake, rising. "I hope Mr. Carara——"

A din of falling pots and pans issued from the cook house, mingled with shrill cries and soft Spanish imprecations; then, with one long-drawn wail, the pandemonium ceased as suddenly as it had commenced, and Carara issued forth, black with anger.

"Ha!" said he, scowling at Mariedetta, who had retreated, her hand upon her bosom. He exhaled a lungful of cigarette smoke through his nostrils fiercely. "You play wit' me, eh?"

"No! No!" Mariedetta ran to him, and, seizing his arm, cooed amorously in Spanish.

"Bah! *Vamos!*" Carara flung her from him, and stalked away.

"Well! Of all the outrageous things!" said Miss Blake. "Why, she was actually flirting with that Chinaman."

"Mariedetta flirts with every man she can find," said Jean calmly, "but she doesn't mean any harm. She'll marry Carara some time—if he doesn't kill her."

"Kill her!" Miss Blake's eyes were round. "He wouldn't do *that!*"

"Indeed, yes. He is a Mexican, and he has a terrible temper."

Miss Blake sank back into the hammock. "How perfectly dreadful—and yet—it must be heavenly to love a man who would kill you."

Miss Chapin lost herself in meditation for an instant. "Culver is almost like that when he is angry. Hello! Here comes our foreman!"

Stover, a tall, gangling cattle man, with drooping, grizzled mustache, came shambling along to the steps. His weather-beaten chaps were much too short for his lengthy limbs, the collar of his faded flannel shirt lacked an inch of meeting at the throat, its sleeves were shrunken until his hairy hands hung down like tassels. He was loose and spineless, his movements tempered with the slothfulness of the far Southwest. His appearance gave one the impression that ready-made garments were never long enough. He dusted his boots with his sombrero, and cleared his throat.

"Evening, Miss Jean. Is Mr. Chapin around?"

"I think you'll find him down by the spring house. Can I do anything for you?"

"Nope!" Stover sighed heavily, and got his frame gradually into motion again.

"You're not looking well, Stover; are you ill?" inquired Miss Chapin.

"Not physical!" said the foreman, checking the movement, which had not yet communicated itself the entire length of his frame. "I reckin my sperret's broke, that's all."

"Haven't you recovered from that foot race?"

"I have not, and I never will, so long as that ornery Centipede outfit has got it on us."

"Nonsense, Stover!"

"What have they done?" inquired Miss Blake curiously. "I haven't heard about any foot race."

"You tell her?" said the man, with another sigh, and a hopeless gesture that told the depth of his feelings.

"Why, Stover hired a fellow a couple of months ago as a horse wrangler. The man said he was hungry, and made a good impression, so we put him on."

Here Stover slowly raised one booted foot, and kicked his other calf.

"The boys nicknamed him Humpy Joe——"

"Why, poor thing! Was he humpbacked?" inquired Helen.

"No!" answered "Still Bill." "Humpback is lucky! We called him Humpy Joe because, when it came to running, he could sure get up and hump himself."

"Soon after Joseph went to work," Jean continued, "the Centipede outfit hired a new cook. You know the Centipede ranch—the one you see over yonder by the foothills."

"It wasn't 'soon after,' it was simultaneous," said Stover darkly. "We're beginnin' to see plain at last." He went on, as if to air the injury that was gnawing him: "One day we hear that this grub slinger over yon-

der thinks he can run, which same is as welcome to us as the smell of flowers on a spring breeze, for Humpy Joe had amused us in his idle hours by running jack rabbits to earth——"

"Not really?" said Miss Blake.

"Well, no, but from what we see we judge he'd ought to limp a hundred yards in about nothing and three-fifths seconds, so we frame a race between him and the Centipede cook."

"As a matter of fact, there has been a feud for years between the two outfits," Jean offered.

"With tumulchous joy we bet our wages and all the loose gear we have, and in a burst of childish enthusiasm we put up—the talking machine."

"A phonograph?"

"Yes. An Echo Phonograph," said Miss Chapin.

"'Of New York and Paris,'" added Stover.

"Our boys won it from this very Centipede outfit at a broncho-busting tournament in Cheyenne."

"Wyoming!" Stover made the location definite.

"The Centipede crowd took their defeat badly on Frontier Day, and swore to get even."

"And was Humpy Joe defeated?" asked Helen.

"Was he?" "Still Bill" shook his head sadly, and sighed for a third time. "It looked like he was running backward, miss."

"But, really, he was only beaten a foot. It was a wonderful race. I saw it," said Jean. "It made me think of the races at college."

Miss Blake puckered her brows trying to think.

"Joseph!" she said. "No, I don't think I have seen him."

Stover's lips met grimly. "I don't reckon you have, miss. Since that race he has been hard to descry. He passed from view hurriedly, so to speak, headed toward the foothills, and leaping from crag to crag like the hardy Shamrock of the Swiss Yelps."

Miss Blake giggled. "What made him hurry so?"

"Us!" Stover gazed at her solemnly. "We ain't none of us been the same since that foot race. You see, it ain't the financial value of that Echo Phonograph, nor the 'double-cross' that hurts; it's the fact that the mangiest outfit in the Territory has trimmed us out of the one thing that stands for honor and excellence and 'scientific attainment,' as the judge said when we won it. That talking machine meant more to us than you Eastern folks can understand, I reckon."

"If I were you, I would cheer up," said Miss Blake kindly, and with some importance. "Miss Chapin has a college friend coming this week, and he can win back your trophy."

Stover glanced up at Jean quickly.

"Is that right, Miss Chapin?"

"He can if he will," Jean asserted.

"Can he run?"

"He is the intercollegiate champion," declared that young lady, with proud dignity.

"And do you reckon he'd run for us and the Echo Phonograph 'of New York and Paris,' if we framed a race? It's an honor!"

But Miss Chapin suddenly recalled her brother's caution of the day before, and hesitated.

"I—I don't think he would. You see, he is an amateur—he might be out of training——"

"The idea!" exclaimed Miss Blake indignantly. "If Culver won't run, I know who will!" She closed her lips firmly, and turned to the foreman. "You tell your friends that we'll see you get your trophy back."

"Helen, I——"

"I mean it!" declared Miss Blake, with spirit.

Stover bowed loosely. "Thank you, miss. The very thought of it will cheer up the gang. Life 'round here is blacker'n a spade flush. I think I'll tell Willie." He shambled rapidly off around the house.

"Helen, dear, I don't want Culver to get mixed up in this affair," explained Miss Chapin, as soon as they were alone. "It's all utterly foolish. Jack doesn't want him to, either."

"Very well. If Culver doesn't feel

that he can beat that cook running, I know who will try. Mr. Speed will do anything I ask. It's a shame the way those men have been treated."

"But Mr. Speed isn't a sprinter."

"Indeed!" Miss Blake bridled. "Perhaps Culver Covington isn't the only athlete in Yale College. I happen to know what I'm talking about. Naturally the two boys have never competed against each other, because they are friends—Mr. Speed isn't the sort to race his roommate. Oh, he wouldn't tell me he could run if it were not true."

"I don't think he will consent when he learns the truth."

"I assure you," said Miss Blake sweetly, "he will be delighted."

III.

It was still early in the afternoon when Jack Chapin and the youthful chaperon found the other young people together on the gallery.

"Here's a telegram from Speed," he began.

"It's terribly funny," said Mrs. Keap. "That Mexican brought it to us down at the spring house."

Miss Blake lost her bored expression, and sat up in the hammock, as the owner of the Flying Heart ranch read:

"Mr. Jack Chapin.

"Dear Jack: I couldn't wait for Covington, so meet me with brass band and fireworks this afternoon. Have flowers in bloom in the little park beside the depot, and see that the daisies nod to me.

"J. Wallingford Speed."

"Park, eh?" said Fresno dryly. "Telegraph office, water tank, and a cattle chute. Where does this fellow think he is?"

"Here is a postscript," added Chapin.

"'I have a valet, who does not seem to enjoy the trip. Divide a kiss among the girls.'"

"Well, well! He's stingy with his kisses," observed Berkeley Fresno. "Who is this humorous party?"

"He was a freshman at Yale the year I graduated," explained Jack.

"Too bad he never got out of that class." It was evident that Mr. Speed's levity made no impression upon the glee-club tenor. "He hates to talk about himself, doesn't he?"

"I think he is very clever," said Miss Blake warmly.

"How well do you know him?"

"Not as well as I'd like to."

Fresno puffed at his little pipe without remarking at this.

"Well! Who wants to go and meet him?" queried Jack.

"Won't you?" asked his sister.

"I can't. I've just got word from the Eleven X that I'm wanted. The foreman is hurt. I may not be back for some time."

"Nigger Mike met *me*," observed Fresno darkly.

"Then Nigger Mike for Speed," laughed the cattle man. "I've told Carara to hitch up the pintos for me. I must be going."

"I'll see that you are safely started," said the young widow; and, leaving the younger trio on the gallery, they entered the house.

When they had gone, Jean smiled wisely at Helen.

"Roberta's such a thoughtful chaperon," she observed, whereupon Miss Blake giggled.

As for Mrs. Keap, she was inquiring of Jack, with genuine solicitude:

"Do you really mean that you may be gone for some time?"

"I do. It may be a week; it may be longer. I can't tell until I get over there."

"I'm sorry!" Mrs. Keap's face showed some disappointment.

"So am I."

"I shall have to look out for these young people all by myself."

"What a queer little way you have of talking, as if you were years and years old."

"I do feel as if I were. I—I—well, I have had an unhappy experience. You know unhappiness builds months into years."

"When Jean got up this house party," young Chapin began absently, "I thought I should be bored to death. But—I haven't been. You know, I

don't want to go over there?" He nodded vaguely toward the south.

"I thought perhaps it suited your convenience." His companion watched him gravely. "Are you quite sure that your sister's guests have not—had something to do with this sudden determination?"

"I am quite sure. I never liked the old Flying Heart so much as I do today. I never regretted leaving it so much as I do at this moment."

"We may be gone before you return."

Young Chapin started. "You don't mean that, really?"

Mrs. Keap nodded her dark head. "It was all very well for me to chaperon Helen on the way out from the East, but—it isn't exactly regular for me to play that part here, with other young people to look after."

"But you understand, of course—Jean must have explained to you. Mother was called away suddenly, and she can't get back now. You surely won't leave—you *can't.*" Chapin added hopefully: "Why, you would break up Jean's party. You see, there's nobody around here to take your place."

"But——"

"Nonsense! This is an unconventional country. What's wrong with you as a chaperon, anyway? Nobody out here even knows what a chaperon is. And I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Do you really think that would help?" Roberta's eyes laughed humorously.

"I'm not thinking of the others; I'm thinking of myself," declared the young man boldly. "I don't want you to go before I return. You must not! If you go, I—I shall follow you." He grasped her hand impulsively.

"Oh!" exclaimed the chaperon. "This makes it even more impossible. Go! GO!" She pushed him away, her color surging. "Go to your old Eleven X ranch right away."

"But I mean it," he declared earnestly. Then, as she retreated farther: "It's no use, I shan't go now until——"

"You have known me less than a week!"

"That is long enough. Roberta——"

Mrs. Keap spoke with honest embarrassment. "Listen! Don't you see what a situation this is? If Jean and Helen should ever discover——"

"Jean planned it all; even this."

Mrs. Keap stared at him in horrified silence.

"You do love me, Roberta?" Chapin undertook to remove the girl's hands from her face, when a slight cough in the hall behind caused him to turn suddenly, in time to see Berkeley Fresno passing the open door.

"There! You see!" Mrs. Keap's face was tragic. *"You see!"* She turned and fled, leaving the master of the ranch in the middle of the floor, bewildered, but a bit inclined to be happy.

A moment later, the plump face of Berkeley Fresno appeared cautiously around the doorjamb. He coughed again gravely.

"I happened to be passing," said he. "You'll pardon me?"

"This is the most thickly settled spot in New Mexico!" Chapin declared, with an artificial laugh, choking his indignation.

Fresno slowly brought his round body out from concealment.

"I came in to get a match."

"Why don't you carry matches?"

Fresno puffed complacently upon his pipe. "This," he mused, as his host departed, "eliminates the chaperon, and that helps some."

"Still Bill" Stover lost no time in breaking the news to the boys.

"There's something comin' off," he advised Willie. "We've got another foot runner!"

If he had hoped for an outburst of rapture on the part of the little gun man, he was disappointed, for Willie shifted his holster, smiled evilly through his glasses, and inquired, with ominous restraint:

"Where is he?"

Being the one man on the Flying Heart who had occasion to wear a gun,

Willie seldom smiled from a sense of humor.

Here it may be said that, deceived at first by his scholarly appearance, his fellow laborers had jibed at Willie's affectation of a swinging holster, but the custom had languished abruptly. When it became known who he was, the other ranch hands had volubly declared that this was a free country, where a man might exercise a wide discretion in the choice of personal adornment; and, as for them, they avowed unanimously that the practice of packing a Colt's was one which met with their most cordial approbation.

In time, Willie's six-shooter had become accepted as a part of the local scenery, and, like the scenery, no one thought of remarking upon it, least of all those who best knew his lack of humor.

He had come to them out of the Nowhere, some four years previously, and while he never spoke of himself, and discouraged reminiscences in others, it became known through those vague, uncharted channels by which news travels on the frontier, that back in the Texas Panhandle there was a limping marshal who felt regrets at mention of Willie's name; and that, farther north, were other men who had a superstitious dread of undersized cow men with spectacles.

There were also stories of lonesome "run-ins," which, owing to Willie's secretiveness and the permanent silence of the other participants, never became more than intangible rumors; but he was a good ranch man, attended to his business, and the sheriff's office was remote, so Willie had worked on unmolested.

"This here is a real foot runner," said Stover.

"Exactly," agreed the other. "Where is he?"

"He'll be here this afternoon. Nigger Mike's bringin' him over from the railroad. He's a guest."

"Oh!"

"Yep! He's intercollegit champeen of Yale."

"Yale?" repeated the near-sighted man. "Don't know's I ever been there. Much of a town?"

"I ain't never traveled East myself, but Miss Jean and the little, yaller-haired girl say he's the fastest man in the world. I figgered we might rib up something with the Centipede." "Still Bill" winked sagely.

"See here, do you reckon he'd run?"

"Sure! He's a friend of the boss. And he'll run on the level, too. He can't be nothin' like Humpy."

"If he is, I'll git him," said the cowboy. "Oh, I'll git him sure, guest or no guest. But how about the phonograph?"

"The Centipede will put it up quick enough; there ain't no sentiment in that outfit."

"Then it sounds good."

"An' it'll work. Gallagher's anxious to trim us again. Some folks can't stand prosperity."

Willie spat unerringly at a grasshopper. "Lord!" said he. "It's too good! It don't sound possible."

"Well, it is, and our man will be here this evenin'. Watch out for Nigger Mike, and when he drives up let's give this party a welcome that'll warm his heart on the jump. There's nothin' like a good impression."

"I'll be on the job," assured Willie. "But I state, right here and now, if we do get a race there ain't a-goin' to be no chance of our losin' for a second time."

And Stover went on his way to spread the tidings.

It was growing dark when the rattle of wheels outside the ranch house brought the occupants to the porch in time to see Nigger Mike halt his buckboard and two figures prepare to descend.

"It's Mr. Speed!" cried Miss Blake. Then she uttered a scream, as the velvet darkness was rent by a dozen tongues of flame, while a shrill yelping arose, as of an Apache war party.

"It's the boys," said Jean. "What on earth has possessed them?"

But Stover had planned no ordinary reception, and the pandemonium did not

cease until the men had emptied their weapons.

Then Mr. J. Wallingford Speed came stumbling up the steps and into the arms of his friends, the tails of his dust coat streaming.

"Really, this is more than I expected," he gasped; then, turning, doffed his straw hat to the half-revealed figures beyond the light, and cried gayly: "Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you for missing me."

"Yow-ee!" responded the cowboys.

"How do you do, Miss Chapin!" Speed shook hands with his hostess, and in the radiance from the open doorway she saw that his face was round and boyish, and his smile peculiarly engaging.

She welcomed him appropriately; then said: "This reception is quite as startling to us as to you. You know, Mr. Speed, that we have with us a friend of yours." She slightly drew Helen forward. "And this is Mrs. Keap, who is looking after us a bit while mother is away. Roberta, may I present Mr. Covington's friend, and ask you to be good to him?"

"Don't forget me," said Fresno, pushing into the light.

"Mr. Berkeley Fresno, of Leland-Stanford University."

"Hello, Frez!" Speed thrust out his hand warmly.

Not so the Californian. He replied, with hauteur:

"Fresno! F-r-e-s-n-o." And allowed the newcomer to grasp a limp, moist hand.

"Ah! Go to the head of the class! I'm sorry you broke your wrist, however." The Eastern lad spoke lightly, and gave the palm a hearty squeeze, then turned to Jean.

"I dare say you are all disappointed, Miss Chapin, that Culver didn't come with me, but he'll be along in a day or so. I simply couldn't wait." He avoided glancing at Helen Blake, whose answering blush was lost in the darkness.

"I did think, when you drove up, that that might be Mr. Covington with you," Miss Chapin remarked wistfully.

"Oh, no, that's my man." Speed glanced around him. "And, by the way, where is he?"

The sound of angry voices came through the gloom, then out into the light came "Still Bill" Stover, Willie, and Carara, dragging between them a globular person, who was rebelling loudly.

"Stover! What is this?" questioned Miss Chapin, stepping to the edge of the veranda.

"This gent stampedes in the midst of our welcome," explained the foreman, "so we have to rope him before he gets away." It was seen now that Carara's lariat was tightly drawn about the new arrival's waist.

Then the "valet" broke into coherent speech, but he spoke a tongue not common to his profession.

"Nix on that welcome stuff," he burst forth, in husky, alcoholic accents. "That goes on the doormat." It was plain that he was very angry. "If that racket means welcome, I don't want it. Take that clothesline off of me."

Carara loosened the noose, and his captive rolled up the steps, mopping his face with his handkerchief.

"What made you run away?" demanded Speed.

"Any time a bunch of bandits unhitch their gats, I'm on my way," sputtered the fat man. "I'm gun shy, see? And when this hold-up comes off, I beat it, till that Cuban rummy with the medals on his dicer rides a live horse up my back."

"You don't appreciate the honor," explained his employer; then, turning to the others, he announced: "Will you allow me to introduce Mr. Lawrence Glass? He isn't really a valet, you know, Miss Chapin, and he doesn't care for the West yet. It is his first trip."

"I have heard my brother speak of Larry Glass," said Jean graciously.

Mr. Glass curtsied awkwardly, and, swinging his right foot back of his left, tapped the floor with his toe.

"You were a trainer at Yale when Jack was there?"

"That's me," Mr. Glass wheezed. "I'm there with the big rub, too. Wally

said he was going to train during vacation, so he staked me to a trip out here, and I came along to look after him."

"Come into the house," said Jean. "Stover will see to your baggage."

As they entered, Berkeley Fresno saw the late arrival bend over Helen Blake, and heard him murmur:

"The same unforgettable eyes of Italian blue."

And Mr. Fresno decided to dislike Wally Speed, even if it required an effort.

IV.

It was on the following morning that Miss Blake made bold to request her favor from J. Wallingford Speed. They had succeeded in isolating themselves upon the vine-shaded gallery at the rear of the house, and the conversation had been largely of athletics, but this, judging from the rapt expression of the girl, was a subject of surpassing interest. Speed, quick to take a cue, plunged on.

"I would have made the varsity basketball team myself, if I hadn't been so tiny," said Helen. "I have always wanted to be tall, like Roberta."

"I shouldn't care for that," said the young man.

"You know she was a wonderful player?"

"So I've heard."

"Do you know," mused Helen, "I have never forgotten what you told me that first day we met. I think it was perfectly lovely of you."

"What was that?" Now it must be admitted that J. Wallingford Speed in his relations with the other sex frequently found himself in a position requiring mental gymnastics of a high order, but as a rule, his memory was good, and he seldom crossed his own trail, so to speak. In this instance, he was utterly without remembrance, however, and hence was noncommittal.

"What you told me about your friendship for Mr. Covington. I think it is very unselfish of you."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," observed the young man, vainly racking his brain. "Nobody could help liking Culver."

"Yes, but how many men would step aside and let their best friend win prize after prize, and never undertake to compete against him?"

Speed blushed faintly, as any modest man might have done.

"Did I tell you that?" he inquired.

"Indeed you did."

"Then please don't breathe it to a mortal soul. I must have said a great deal that first day, but——"

"But I *have* spoken of it, and I said I thought it was fine of you."

"You have spoken of it?"

"Yes, I told Jean."

The Yale man undertook to change the conversation abruptly, but Miss Blake was a determined young lady. She continued:

"Of course, it was very magnanimous of you to always step aside in favor of your best friend, but it isn't fair to yourself, it really isn't, and so I have arranged a little plan whereby you can do something to prove your prowess and still not interfere with Mr. Covington in the least."

Speed cleared his throat nervously.

"Tell me," he said, "what it is."

And Miss Blake told him the story of the shocking treachery of Humpy Joe, together with the miserable undoing of the Flying Heart.

"Why, those poor fellows are broken-hearted," she concluded. "Their despair over losing that talking machine would be funny if it were not so tragic. I told them you would win it back for them; and you will, won't you? Please!" She turned her blue eyes upon him appealingly, and the young man was lost.

"I'll take ten chances," he said. "Where does the raffle come off?"

"Oh, it isn't a raffle; it's a foot race. You must run with that Centipede cook."

"I? Run a race?" exclaimed the young college man, aghast.

"Yes, I've promised that you would. You see, this isn't like a college event, and Culver isn't here yet."

"But he'll be here in a day or so." Speed felt as if a very large man were

choking him; he decided his collar was too tight.

"Oh, I've talked it all over with Jean. She doesn't want Culver to run, anyhow."

"Why not?" inquired he suspiciously.

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"If Miss Chapin doesn't want Culver to run, you surely wouldn't want me to."

"Not at all! If Mr. Covington knew the facts of the case he would be only too happy to do it. And you see *you* know the facts."

Speed was about to shape a gracious, but firm, refusal of the proffered honor, when "Still Bill" Stover appeared at the steps, doffed his faded Stetson, and bowed limply.

"Mornin', Miss Blake!" To the rear, Speed saw three other men: An Indian, tall, swart, and saturnine, who walked with a limp; a picturesque Mexican, with a spangled hat and silver spurs, evidently the captor of Lawrence Glass on the evening previous; and an undersized little man, with thick-rimmed spectacles and a heavy-hanging holster from which peeped a gun butt. All were smiling pleasantly, and seemed a bit abashed.

"Good morning, Mr. Stover," said Helen pleasantly. "This is Mr. Speed, of whom I spoke to you yesterday."

Stover bowed again, and mumbled something about the honor of this meeting, whereat Miss Blake cast her eyes over the other members of the group, and said:

"I'm afraid I can't introduce your friends; I haven't met them."

The loquacious foreman came promptly to the rescue, rejoicing in an opportunity of displaying his oratorical gifts.

"Then I'll make you acquainted with the best brandin' outfit in these parts." He waved a long, bony arm at the Mexican, who flashed his white teeth. "This greaser is Aurelio Maria Carara. Need I say he's Mex, and a preemeer roper." Carara bowed and swept the ground with his high-peaked headpiece. "The Maduro gent yonder is Mr. Cloudy. His mother, being a Navajo squaw, named him, accordin' to the rights and customs of her tribe, selecting the title of Cloudy-but-the-Sun-Shines, which same has proved a misnomer, him bein' a pessimist, for fair."

Miss Blake and her companion smiled and nodded, at which Stover, encouraged beyond measure, elaborated.

"He's had a hist'ry, too. When he reaches man's real estate, the Injun agent ropes, throws, and hogties him, then sends him East to be cultivated. He spends four years kickin' a football ——" Speed interrupted, with an exclamation of genuine interest.

"Oh, it's true as gospel," the foreman averred. "When he goes lame in his off leg, they ship him back, and in spite of them handicaps he has become one rustlin' savage at a roundup."

"What college did you attend?" inquired Speed politely. The question fell upon unresponsive ears. Cloudy did not stir nor alter the direction of his sombre glance.

"He don't talk none," Stover explained. "Conversation, which I esteem as a gift deevine, is a lost art with him. I reckon he don't average a word a week. What language he did know he has forgot, and what he ain't forgot he distrusts."

Turning to the near-sighted man, who had been staring at the college youth meanwhile, the spokesman took a deep breath, and said simply, yet proudly, as if describing the pièce de résistance of this exhibition:

"The four-eyed gent is Willie, plain Willie, a born range rider, and the *best hip shot this side of the Santa Fé trail.*"

Speed beheld an undersized man, of indeterminate age, hollow-chested, thin-faced, gravely benignant. It was not alone his glasses that lent him a scholarly appearance; he had the stooped shoulders, the thoughtful intensity of gaze, the gentle, hesitating backwardness of a book-raised man.

There were tutors at Yale quite as colorless, characterless, and indefinite, and immensely more forceful.

In place of the revolver at his belt, it seemed as if Willie should have car-

ried a geologist's pick, a butterfly net, or a magnifying glass; one was prepared to hear him speak learnedly of microscopy, or even, perhaps, of settlement work.

As a cowboy, he was utterly out of place, and it was quite impossible to take Stover's words seriously.

Nevertheless, Speed acknowledged the introduction pleasantly, while the benevolent little man blinked back of his lenses.

Stover addressed himself to Miss Blake.

"I told the boys what you said, miss, and we four has come as a delegation to find out if it goes."

"Mr. Speed and I were just talking about it when you came," said Helen. "I'm sure he will consent, if you add your entreaties to mine."

"It would sure be a favor," said the cow man, at which the others drew nearer, as if hanging on Speed's answer. Even Cloudy turned his black eyes upon the young man.

The object of their coöperate gaze shifted his feet uncomfortably and felt minded to flee, but the situation would not permit of it. Besides, the affair interested him. His mind was working rapidly, albeit his words were hesitating.

"I—I'm afraid I'm not in shape to run," he ventured. But Stover would have none of this modesty, admirable as it might appear.

"Oh, I talked with your trainer just now. I told him you was tipped off to us as a sprinter."

"What did he say?" inquired Speed, with alarm.

"He said 'no' at first, till I told him who let it out; then he laughed, and said he guessed you was a runner, but you didn't work at it regular. I asked him how good you was, and he said none of the college teams would let you run. That's good enough for us, Mr. Speed."

"But I'm not in condition," objected the youth, with a sigh of gratitude at Glass' irony.

"I reckon he knows more about that than you do. We covered that point, too, and Mr. Glass said you was never better than you are right now. Anyhow, you don't have to bust no records to beat this cook. He ain't so fast."

"It would sure be a kind-hearted act if you'd do it for us," said the little man, in his high, boyish voice. It was a shock to discover that he spoke in a dialect. "There's a heap of sentiment connected with this affair. You see, outside of being a prize that we won at considerable risk, there goes with this phonograph a set of reecords, among which we all have our 'special favorites. Have you ever heard Madam-osella Melby sing 'The Holy City'?"

"I didn't know she sang it," said Speed.

"Take it from me, she did, and you've missed a heap."

"You bet," Stover agreed, in a hushed, awed tone.

"Well, you must have heard Missus Heleney Moray in 'The Baggage Coach Ahead'?" queried the scholarly little man.

At mention of his beloved classic, Carara, the Mexican, murmured softly:

"Ah! 'The Baggage Car'—T'adora Mora! God bless 'er!"

"I must confess I've never had the pleasure," said Speed, whereupon the speaker regarded him pityingly; and Stover, jealous that so much of the conversation had escaped him, inquired:

"Can it be that you never heard that monologue, 'Silas on Fifth Avenoo'?"

Again Speed shook his head.

As if the very memory were hilariously funny, "Still Bill's" shoulders heaved, and stifled laughter caused his Adam's apple to race up and down his leathern throat.

Swallowing his merriment, at length, he recited, in a choking voice, as follows:

"Silas goes up Fifth Avenoo, and climbs into a bus. There is a girl settin' opposite. He says: 'The girl opened her valise, took out her purse, closed her valise, opened her purse, took out a dime, closed her purse, opened her valise, put in her purse, closed her valise, handed the dime to the con-

ductor, got a nickel in change, opened her valise, took out her purse, closed her valise, opened her purse——' "

At this point, the speaker fell into ungovernable hysteria, and exploded, rocking back and forth, slapping his thighs, and hiccoughing with enjoyment.

Willie followed him, as did Carara. Even Cloudy showed his teeth, and the two young people on the porch found themselves joining in, from infection.

It was patent that here lay some subtle humor sufficient to convulse the far Western nature beyond all reason, for Stover essayed repeatedly to check his laughter, before gasping finally:

"Gosh 'lmighty; I never can get past that place. He! He! He! Whoo-hoo! That's sure ridic'lous, for fair." He wiped his eyes with the back of a sun-browned hand, and his frame was racked with barking coughs. "I know the whole blame' thing by heart, but—I can't recite it to you. I bog down right there. Seems like some folks is the darndest fools!"

Speed allowed this good humor to banish his trepidation, and assured the foreman that "Silas on Fifth Avenue" must, indeed, be a very fine monologue.

"It's my favorite," said "Still Bill," "but we all have our picks. Cloudy, here, likes 'Navajo,' which, I agree, is attuned to please the savage year, but to my mind it ain't in the runnin' with 'Silas.' "

"You see what the phonograph means to these gentlemen," said Miss Blake. "I think it's a crying shame that they were cheated out of it, don't you?"

Speed began to outline a plan hastily in his mind.

"I assured them that you would win it back for them, and——"

"We sure hope you will," said Willie earnestly.

"Amen!" breathed the lanky foreman, his cheeks still wet from his tears of laughter, but his face drawn into lines of eagerness.

"Please! For my sake!" urged Helen, placing a gentle little hand upon her companion's arm.

Speed closed his eyes, so to speak, and leaped in the dark.

"All right, I'll do it."

"Yow—ee!" yelled Stover. "We knew you would." Willie was beaming benignantly through his glasses, while both Carara and Cloudy showed their heartfelt gratitude. "Thank you, Miss Blake. Now we'll show up that shave-tail Centipede crowd for what it is."

"Wait!" Speed checked the outburst. "I'll consent upon conditions. I'll run, provided you can arrange the race for an 'unknown.' "

"What does that mean?" Helen asked.

"It means that I don't want my name known in the matter. Instead of arranging for Mr. Whatever-the-Cook's-Name-Is to run a race with J. W. Speed, he must agree to compete against a representative of the Flying Heart ranch, name unknown."

"I don't think that is fair," cried the girl. "Think of the honor."

"Yes, but I'm an amateur; I'd lose my standing."

"That goes for us," said Stover. "We don't care what name you run under. We'll frame the race. Lordy! but this is a glorious event."

"We can't thank you enough," Willie piped. "You're a true sport, Mr. Speed, and we aim to see that you don't get the worse of it in no way. This here race is goin' to be on the square—you hear me talkin'. No double-cross this time."

Unconsciously, the speaker's hand strayed to the gun at his belt, while his smile was grim. Speed started.

"What day shall we set?" inquired Stover.

Wally Speed rapidly calculated the date of Culver's arrival, and said:

"A week from Saturday?" Covington would soon be en route, and was due to arrive in a few days thereafter.

"We'd like to make it to-morrow," ventured Willie.

"Oh, but I must have a chance to get in trim," said the college man.

"One week from Saturday goes," announced Stover. "And we thank you again." Turning to Carara, he directed: "Rope your buckskin and hike for the Centipede. Tell 'em to unlimber their coin. I'll draw a month's wages in advance for every son of a gun on the Flying Heart, and we'll arrange details to-night."

"*Si!*" agreed Carara. "I go."

"And don't waste no time, neither," directed Willie. "You tear like a jack rabbit ahead of a hot wind."

Carara tossed his cigarette aside, and the sound of his spurs was lost around the corner of the house.

"This makes a boy of me," the last speaker continued. "I can hear the plaintiff notes of Madam-o-sella Melby once again."

V.

Larry Glass discovered his protégé on the rear porch, engrossed with Miss Blake, and signaled him from afar, but the young man ignored the signal, and the trainer strolled up to the steps.

"Hello, Larry! What's on your mind?" inquired Speed.

"I'd like to see you." Glass, clad in his sportiest garments, seemed utterly lacking in the proper appreciation of a valet's position. He treated his employer with a tolerant good nature.

Miss Blake excused herself, and went into the house, whereupon her companion showed his irritation. "See here, Larry, don't you know better than to interrupt me in the midst of a hammock talk?"

"Oh, that's all right," wheezed the trainer. "As long as you didn't spill her out, she'll be back."

"Well, what is it?"

"I had a stomach laugh slipped to me just now." He began to shake.

"So you broke up my tête-à-tête to tell me a funny story?"

"Listen here. These cowboys have got you touted for a foot runner." This time Glass laughed aloud hoarsely. "They have framed a race with a ginney down the block."

"All right; I'll run."

Mr. Glass' face abruptly fell into solemn lines. "Quit your kiddin', Wally; you couldn't run a hundred yards in twenty minutes. These guys are on the level. They've sent General Garcia over to cook it."

"Yes. The race comes off in ten days."

Glass allowed his mouth to drop open and his little eyes to peer forth in startled amazement.

"Then it's true? I guess this climate is too much for you," he said. "When did you feel this comin' on?"

Speed laughed. "I know what I'm doing."

With an effort at restraint, the trainer inquired:

"What's the idea?"

"I'll tell you how it came up, Larry. I—I'm very fond of Miss Blake. That's why I broke the record getting out here as soon as I was invited. Well, she believes, from something I said—one of those odd moments, you know—that I'm a great athlete, and she told those cowboys that I'd gladly put on my spiked shoes and carry their colors to victory. You've heard about the phonograph?"

Glass smiled wearily. "I can't hear nothing else."

"When I was accused of being an athlete, I couldn't deny it, could I?"

"I see. You was stringin' the gal, and she called you, eh?"

"I wouldn't express it in quite those terms. I may have exaggerated my abilities slightly." Glass laughed. "She is such a great admirer of athletics, it was quite natural. Any man would have done the same. She got me committed in front of the cowboys, and I had to accept—or be a quitter."

Glass nodded appreciatively. "All the same," said he, "you've got more nerve than a burglar. How you goin' to sidestep?"

"I made the match for an 'unknown,'" Speed winked. "Covington will be here in a day or two. I'll wire him to hurry up. Fortunately, I brought a lot of athletic clothes with me, so I'll go into training under your direction. When Covington gets here, I'll let *him* run."

The fat man sighed with relief. "Now I'm hep. I was afraid you'd try to go through with it."

"Hardly! I'll sprain an ankle, or something. She'll be there with the sympathy. See? Covington will run the race; the cowboys will get their phonograph, and I'll get—well, if I can beat out this native-son tenor singer, I'll invite you to the wedding. There wasn't any other way out."

Glass mopped his brow. "You had me wingin' for a while, but I plugged your game with the cowboys. Pawnee Bill and his Congress of Rough Riders think you're a cyclone."

"It's the first chance I ever had to wear that silk running suit. Who knows? Maybe I *can* run!"

"Nix, now! Don't kid yourself too far. This thing is funny enough as it stands."

"Oh, I dare say it looks like a joke to you, but it doesn't to me, Larry. If I don't marry that girl, I—I'll go off my balance, that's all, and I'm not going to overlook any advantage, whatever. Fresno sings love songs, and he's got a mint of money. Well, I'm going to work this athletic pose to death. I'm going into training, I'm going to talk, eat, sleep, live athletics for a week, and when I'm unexpectedly crippled on the eve of the race, it is going to break my heart. Understand! I am going to be so desperately disappointed that I'll have to choose between suicide and marriage. The way I feel now, I think I'll choose marriage. But you must help."

"Leave it to me, bo!"

"In the first place, I want some training quarters."

"That's right, don't be a piker."

"And I want you to boost."

"I'm there! When do we begin?"

"Right away. Unpack my running suit, and rub some dirt on it—it's too new. I think I'll limber up, and let her get a look at the clothes."

"It's a bright idea, but don't let these animal trainers see you run, or the stuff will be cold in a minute."

"Fine! We'll have secret practice! That suits me perfectly." Speed laughed with joy.

From inside the house came the strains of "Dearie," sung in a sympathetic tenor, and upon the conclusion, Berkeley Fresno's voice, inquiring:

"Miss Blake, did I ever tell you about the time I sang 'Dearie' to the mayor's daughter in Walla Walla?"

Miss Blake appeared on the gallery, with her musical admirer at her elbow.

"Yes," said she sweetly. "You told me all about the mayor's daughter a week ago." Then, spying Speed and his companion, she exclaimed: "Mr. Fresno has a fine voice, hasn't he? He sings with the Stanford Glee Club."

"Indeed."

"Sure!" The Native Son of the Golden West shook up a hammock cushion for the girl. "Tenor," said he sententiously.

"Say no more!" Speed remarked. "It's all right with us."

Fresno looked up.

"What's wrong with my singing?"

"Oh, I've just told the girls that you're going to run that foot race," Helen interposed hurriedly, at which Fresno exploded.

"What's wrong with my running?" inquired Speed.

"I can beat you."

Larry Glass nudged his employer openly, and seemed on the verge of hysteria. "Let him go," said he. "Let him go; he's funny."

Speed addressed Helen with a magnanimous smile.

"Suppose we allow Frez to *sing* this foot race? We'll pull it off in the treble clef."

"Oh, I mean it!" maintained the tenor stubbornly. "I don't want to run Skinner, the cook, but I'll run you to see who does meet him."

Speed shrugged his shoulders indulgently.

"I'm afraid you're a little overweight."

"I'll train down."

"Perhaps if you wait until I beat this cook, I'll take you on."

Glass broke out in husky indignation.

"Sure! Get a rep, cull, get a rep!" Then to his employer: "Come on, Wally, you've got to warm up." He mounted the steps heavily with his protégé.

When they had gone, Miss Blake clapped her hands.

"I'm so excited!" she exclaimed. "You see, it's all my doings. Oh, how I adore athletes!"

"Most young girls do," Fresno smiled sourly. "My taste runs more to music." After a moment's meditation, he observed: "Speed doesn't look like a sprinter to me. I—I'll wager he can't do a hundred yards in fifteen-two."

"'Fifteen-two' is cribbage," said Miss Blake.

"Fifteen and two-fifths seconds is what I mean."

"Is that fast?"

Fresno smiled indulgently this time. "Jean's friend Covington can go the distance in nine and four-fifths seconds. He's a real sprinter. I think this fellow is a joke."

"Indeed, he is *not!* If Mr. Covington can run as fast as that, Mr. Speed can run faster. He told me so."

"Oh!" Fresno looked at her curiously. "The world's record is nine and *three*-fifths; that's the limit of human endurance."

"I hope he doesn't injure himself," breathed the girl, and the tenor wandered away, disgusted beyond measure. When he was out of hearing, he remarked aloud:

"I'll bet he runs so slow we'll have to wind a stop watch on him. Anyhow, I think I'll find out something more about this race."

Once in his room, Mr. J. Wallingford Speed made a search for writing materials, while Larry Glass overhauled a trunk filled with athletic clothing of various descriptions. There were running suits, rowing suits, baseball and football suits, sweaters, jerseys, and bathrobes, all of which were new and unstained. At the bottom, Glass discovered a box full of bronze and near-gold emblems.

"Here's your medals," said he.

"Good! I'll wear them."

"Nix! You can't do that. Those gals will get wise." Glass selected one and read on the reverse side, "Clerk of the Course." Another was engraved "Starter"; all were official badges of some sort or other. "You always were strong on the 'Reception Committee' stuff. There's six of them," said he.

Speed pointed to the bureau.

"Try a nail file. See if you can't scratch off the lettering. How's this?" He read what he had written for the wire:

"CULVER COVINGTON: Come quick. First train. Native Son making love to Jeane.
"WALLY."

"Ten words, and it tells the whole story. I can hardly explain why I want him, can I? He expects to stop off at Omaha for a day or two, but he'll be under way in an hour after he gets this. I hate to spoil his little visit, but he can take that in on his way home. Now I'll ring for somebody, and have this taken over to the station by the first wagon."

"Say! You better scratch this Fresno," said Larry.

"Why?"

"He's hep to you."

"Nonsense!"

Glass looked up at a sound, to discover Mariedetta, the Mexican maid, who had come in answer to Speed's call.

"In the doorway!" the trainer said, under his breath. "Pipe the Cuban queen."

"You call?" inquired Mariedetta of the younger man.

"Yes, I want this telegram to go to the depot as soon as possible."

Mariedetta took the message, and turned silently, but as she went she flashed a look at Glass which caused that short-waisted gentleman to wink at his companion.

"Some frill! Eh? I'm for her! She's strong for me, too."

"How do you know?"

"We talked it over. I gave her a little kiss to keep for me."

"Careful, Larry! She may have a cowboy sweetheart."

Glass grunted disparagingly.

"Them ginneys is jokes to me."

As Speed talked he clad himself in his silken uniform, donned his spiked shoes, and pinned the medals upon his chest.

"How do I look?" he queried.

"Immense! If she likes athletes, it's a walk-away for you."

"Then give me the baby-blue bathrobe with the monogram. We'll go out and trot around a little."

But his complacency received a shock as he stepped out upon the veranda. Not only was Helen Blake awaiting him, but the other girls, as well, while out in front were a dozen or more cowboys whom Fresno had rallied.

"Goin' to take a little run, eh?" inquired Stover. "We allowed we'd lay off a few minutes, and watch you."

"Thanks!"

"Yes," Fresno spoke up. "I told the boys we'd better hold a stop watch on you, and see what shape you're in."

"A stop watch?" said Glass sharply.

"Yes! I have one."

"Not to-day!" said Speed's trainer. "No!" he admonished, as his protégé turned upon him. "Some other time, mebbe. You're just off a long trip and I can't risk gettin' you stove up."

"To-morrow, perhaps," urged Fresno.

"I wouldn't promise."

"Then the next day. I've timed lots of men. The watch is correct."

"Let's see it!" Glass held out his hand.

"Oh, it's a good watch. It cost me one hundred and twenty-five dollars."

As Glass reached for the timepiece, an unfortunate accident occurred. Speed struck his elbow, and the watch fell. Fresno dove for it, then held it to his ear, and shook it.

"You've broken it," he cried accusingly.

"Oh, I'm sorry! My fault," Speed apologized.

"If it was your fault, maybe you'll fix it," suggested the tenor.

"Gladly!" Speed turned to his trainer. "Buy a new alarm clock for our little friend." He stripped off his bathrobe, and handed it to his trainer. "Is she looking at me?" he whispered.

"Both eyes, big as saucers."

Speed settled his spikes into the dirt as he had seen other sprinters do, set himself for an instant, then loped easily around the house, and out of sight.

To the cowboys, this athletic panoply was vastly impressive. With huge satisfaction, they noticed the sleeveless shirt, the loose running trunks, and, above all, the generous display of medals. With a wild yell of delight, they broke out upon the trail of their champion, only to have Glass thrust his corpulent body in their path. With an upflung arm, he stemmed the tide.

"It's no use, boys," he cried. "He's a mile away."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The second installment of this story will appear two weeks later, in the first May issue. On sale April 10th.

The Isle of Doom

By James Francis Dwyer

One of the most gripping short stories you ever read. It is the personal narrative of a philosophic wanderer who believed with Emerson that crime and punishment grow on the one bough, and therefore come to the person who plucks the branch

KENYON lived on the outer fringe. He knew there were big cities—knew in the same indefinite way that the child born and bred in the slums knows that there are big open spots in the world, where the air is free from grime and smoke. There are a lot like Jack Kenyon on the unbeaten tracks. They are the world's trekkers, watching where the dawn shafts spring from space, and praying God to let the world fill up slowly so that they may die without being crushed for breathing space.

He told me this story one night in Banjermassin in a small grogshop opposite a little Dutch chapel near the wharves, where the puffs of wind prowling up the Banjar advanced cautiously, seemingly afraid lest they might lose themselves in the dark alleyways where the stenches fought eternally.

The minister of the church was speaking of eternal rewards and punishments, and his vigorous assertions burrowed into the air like sound projectiles. The thick shawl of night tried to smother them, but they cut their way through, and seemed to gain an increased penetrating power from the opposition. One pictured them as tangible things, red-hot, whistling missiles hurled against moral turpitude, ripping away down through the Java Sea and smiting the ears of the ungodly.

Kenyon had been silent for quite a while, his eyes fixed on the bottom of his glass. The heavy air did not encourage an animated conversation, and I was not disposed to break the silence. Presently he spoke.

"He's right!" he cried. "By gosh, he's right!"

My mind immediately suggested that Kenyon's remark referred to the ministerial declamations coming from the chapel, and I turned a listening ear to the sermon. The clergyman was repeating the Emersonian statement that crime and punishment grow on the one bough, and therefore come to the person who plucks the branch, and Kenyon shook his head sagely as he listened.

"That's so!" he cried. "He's got the hang of things sure as eggs."

He turned on me with a quick movement that upset the glass, the liquor oozing slowly through the plaited Dyak mat that covered the table.

"Did I ever tell you the story of the *Queen Regent?*" he asked.

I shook my head, and Kenyon waited till the minister had rounded off his discourse with a broadside against sin that awakened the Malay bartender who was dozing in the corner.

"She ran into Port Darwin one day in eighty-nine," continued Kenyon, "the smartest seagoing yacht that ever heeled over before the trades. I was a boy working for 'Blackbirder' Benson, and the masts of the *Queen Regent* beckoned me like big white fingers. When I think of those masts I wonder why I didn't tell this story after it happened. It seems as if I had to go on that yacht; you wait and tell me what you think.

It looks as if I was wanted as a witness to tell the thing over the world, yet I haven't spoken about it to a soul till to-night.

"I got a berth easy enough. The yacht was out of Liverpool, owned by an English baronet of the name of Sir Creswell Danersford, and she was on a cruise round the Marshall and Caroline groups. There were seven in the crew, including the captain and a deaf and dumb boy, who waited on the owner. Sir Creswell was a big, red-faced man, and just because his face was as broad as the war shield of a Kyan he tried to make it look broader by wearing side whiskers that stuck out like the hair of a Papuan belle.

"If I had been a man I might have been told something before we cleared Port Darwin, but I was only a boy at the time. That's why I had to sniff mystery for two days while we were beating across the Arafura. The five in the fo'c'sle—the mate, Fulton, camped there—talked of only one thing for those two days. They called that thing 'It.'

"We had the same brand of talk for breakfast, dinner, and supper. They were wishing all sorts of things about this 'It.' They were wishing the thing was lighter, handier, and more easily got at; and each of 'em had a spot in his eye where he reckoned he'd like to have the affair to keep him company.

"White, a cockney, voted for the Mile End Road; Fulton picked Suez as his choice; Beck had Glasgow in his eye; and the other two, Brennan and Camphin, wished that they had 'It' in a little kennel they knew of near the Liverpool docks. But they never said what the thing was. It was just 'It,' plain 'It,' and the talk got on my nerves.

"Was your mind ever that hungry to know the answer to a question that it fairly sprang upon the answer when it did come along? Mine was like that. It was ready to pounce on the slightest clue that came along, and on the second day the clue came. The deaf and dumb boy took ill, and the captain ordered me to clean up Sir Creswell's cabin. Then I saw 'It.' I knew the thing the moment I clapped eyes on it.

"I went back to the foc's'le and found White, Brennan, and Camphin sitting on a bunk and talking in whispers. I went across and sat near them. White was speaking, and, of course, 'It' was the topic.

"'I've just been dusting it,' I said, when he stopped for a minute to get his breath.

"The three looked at me and then at each other. White started to whistle, but Camphin leaned over and gripped hold of my sleeve.

"'Where?' he asked.

"'In Sir Creswell's cabin,' I said, and I knew by the way he looked at me that I had solved the puzzle.

"The three of 'em tried to keep from questioning me, but they were so full up on that matter that they couldn't keep their curiosity in check. The deaf and dumb fellow couldn't tell them much because none of them knew the sign language, and they just fell upon me with half a hundred questions.

"I had struck 'It' all right. Their fancy conversational topic was a black safe in Sir Creswell's cabin—a big safe with the Danersford arms painted on it. There were two gold eagles holding double-edged swords in their claws, and underneath were the words *'Quantum vis.'* Say, what does that mean, anyhow?"

"I think it means, 'As much as you will.'" I answered.

"H'm," grunted Kenyon. "'As much as you will,' eh? That's funny. That bunch didn't know, and I've never asked anybody else. You see, I've never told this story before, but I should have done so. I know I should. I was sent on that yacht as a witness, and I've been a dumb one, more shame to me.

"They told me everything about Sir Creswell after I had satisfied their curiosity about the safe. The baronet had delusions. He carried all his money with him in sovereigns, and the big money box in the cabin held his fortune. It had come aboard at Tilbury, shipped straight from the Bank of England, and all the way out to Port Darwin the

crowd in the foc's'le were guessing at the amount of coin inside it.

"You can picture them doing that guesswork, can't you? At Gibraltar they reckoned there were two hundred and fifty thousand sovereigns inside. At Suez they spun the figure up to half a million. The heat was beginning to stir their imaginations up, see? Slamming across the Indian it got between them and their sleep, and the figures went up with hundred thousand leaps. When I got the strength of the secret they estimated the contents at a million, and it was spilling over that figure while we were cutting through Torres Strait.

"Sir Creswell had 'em all right. He was mad, sure. He had written a book to prove that the Israelites had wandered into the South Seas, and he was going down to those old Nantauch ruins in Ponape to hunt up fresh proof. The captain was a short, fat man named Smedley, and he suffered from chapped hands and asthma.

"Did you ever see a man that suffered from chapped hands who was any way imaginative? Smedley wasn't. If he had one ounce of imagination he would have felt the curiosity wave that was coming out of the foc's'le. But he didn't; and Sir Creswell was thinking so hard about the wandering Israelites that he didn't worry about the thoughts of common sailor men.

"We were slipping past the Louisiades when the thing happened. Did you ever think how much piracy those islands of Oceania are responsible for? There was one of those little green, heart-pulling spots to leeward one morning, and it brought that thing to a head in five seconds.

"I don't know what was done. I came up the ladder to find that White and Camphin had lashed the three boats together and built a platform over them, while Fulton, Brennan, and Beck were busy rigging a tackle at the side. I didn't see the captain or Sir Creswell after that.

"Fulton ordered me down to give White a hand, and because I asked White a question he banged me on the side of the head with his hammer, and I rolled under the planking that he was fixing to the boats.

"When I recovered my senses we were on our way to the island, and that big safe was perched in the centre of the staging. I couldn't see the *Queen Regent,* so I guess where she had gone. Fulton was giving directions on the pontoon, and we were moving over a sea of glass toward the land.

"We were close in to the island when the fog came on us. It swept up from the south like a big, fat cloud rolling along that greasy, smooth sea, and a thing like that is pretty unusual in those parts, isn't it? It seemed as if it was galloping to head us off from the shore, and we couldn't move too fast. Ten minutes after we first sighted it coming, it was on us, and we lost our directions the minute it took us in its long white arms.

"Fogs are rather depressing at any time, but that white sheet crawling up out of a clear sky was worse than the ordinary. It sat on us, sort of bent our shoulders with the weight of it. We couldn't see a yard in front of us, and the five of them gave up pulling and stood with their hands on the safe, as if they were afraid it would walk away into that wall of mist. You couldn't guess how that safe had taken a grip of their minds.

"It must have been near dark when we struck land. We were swirling along in a current when the boats crashed into something and shot backward. We came forward again and bumped the second time.

"The staging started to splinter beneath the weight of the safe, and Beck let out a yell of agony. The deaf and dumb fellow would have yelled, too, if he'd only known how. The safe had crashed forward and pinned the two of them beneath it.

"Fulton started to roar and curse. There was a big danger of us being swamped or smashed to pieces against the shore, and he jumped overboard into the shallow water, and tried to drag the pontoon onto a bit of sloping beach. The rest of us got at the safe

with levers, and when the boat grounded we toppled the big black money box forward, and over it went into about two feet of water.

"The raft shot back with such a jerk when the weight was lifted that the four of us who were lifting the safe were flung into the water, and before we had time to scramble to our feet the undertow sucked the raft into the wall of fog like as if a hand had gripped it.

"It was sudden, that. We couldn't see a sign of it or hear any voices. P'r'aps Beck was too much injured to call out, and, of course, the deaf and dumb fellow couldn't.

"The waves were washing round our legs as we stood by the safe trying to see the raft in the fog. We couldn't do anything else. You could hardly see two yards in front of you, then, and the man who started to swim round in search of the boats would have a mighty poor chance of getting back to land.

"'Get the safe up on the beach,' growled Fulton, and the rest of us levered it up out of the water.

"Fulton wasn't troubling much about Beck or the deaf and dumb fellow. He had a skull that went up to a point like a tomcat's, and I bet he was thinking that there were two less to divide the money with. He hadn't spoken to me since he ordered me down to help White; but when we got the safe on dry land he turned and gave me a cuff in the ear that sent me backward.

"'Pity you didn't drift away instead of Beck,' he said. But I didn't answer. There was precious little use of picking a row just then.

"A blear-eyed moon started to peep through the fog, and we began to get a dim idea of our whereabouts. The island seemed to be only a few feet over sea level, and the ground was moist. It was a little bit more than moist. If we stood for five minutes in the one spot we sank up to our ankles, and we kept moving round looking for dry places.

"It was White who noticed the safe. 'Quick!' he yelled. 'She's sinking!'

"And it was sinking. It had gone down about eighteen inches while we were pottering round looking for a dry place to stand in, and we had a job to dig it out.

"We rolled it about five yards farther inland, then we stopped and watched it. The moon was shining a bit stronger then, and we could see. The name of the manufacturers, the Britannic Safe Company, was lettered in gold about six inches from the bottom, and as we stared the name was swallowed up.

"'Hell!' roared Fulton. 'Get your sticks under her again.'

"We went twenty yards farther and watched the same thing happen. We went a hundred and saw the safe start its disappearing trick again. We went half a mile, testing every yard of the ground as we rolled the thing along, but we couldn't find a solid spot.

"We had to turn back then. The island was only half a mile long, and there wasn't three square inches of it that would hold a grown man five minutes. It was just a floating bed of lava cinders held together by roots of grass, and it was just as qualified to hold up that big iron safe as a rocking-horse is to hold the Chinese giant!

"I don't know how many times we moved the safe that night. I guess about four hundred. Two minutes was as long as we dared leave it in one spot, because if it got down any deeper there was a chance of it going for keeps. It was like standing on a big sponge. The holes made a sucking noise when we heaved the safe out of them, and that row didn't improve our nerves as we kept on the move.

"Fulton accused the others of blocking him when he wanted to open the thing on the yacht, and White and Camphin gave him the lie, and told him he was in too much of a hurry to get away from his own handiwork.

"It went on like that all through the night. The four of 'em cursing at each other every time we were compelled to move the thing. It was devilish the way that ground sucked at the safe. Did you ever see quicksand eating any-

thing? Well, that island was alive. There was a mouth gurgling at each man's boots, and a big maw guzzling at the safe every time we stopped. Get on your nerves, that sort of thing, wouldn't it?"

"I didn't work as hard as the rest on the transportation game. I had no hand in stealing the safe, and I didn't intend to take any of the money. But I had to help, or those four would have killed me.

"They worked like madmen. That safe had been on their minds ever since they left the Thames, and they were nearly mad to think of losing it, after what they had done. Nearly mad? I guess they were raving lunatics before the night was over.

"They kicked the island, and danced on it, swearing at the spongy cinders all the time. They got down on their knees, and clawed at the stuff with their fingers, and screeched when it started to swallow them as they knelt. Then the four of 'em would fumble with the lock of the safe and beat it with the pieces of wood. All the tools and food had been lost when the boats were drawn into the fog.

"The morning came at last, and we could see all over the island. It was only half a mile each way, and there wasn't a patch of grass, stone, or stick upon it. Anything heavy on that cindery cushion didn't stay there long. It just slipped through and went plumb to the bottom of the Pacific.

"We kept on rolling the safe. Sometimes one of the four saw a place that looked a little drier than the rest of the ground, and we'd roll the safe there in a hurry. But it was always the same. The moment we stopped, the mouth started to suck at the big box. Good God! I dreamed of those million mouths for months afterward. Every time we pulled our boots out of a hole we looked back and shivered.

"It was hot that morning. The Pacific was just beside us, and the ocean seemed to be lying there, watching us, quite pleased at the trap into which we had fallen. But Fulton didn't let us stop a minute. Up and down the island we went, without a rest, and the thing became a sort of nightmare. I wanted to throw away my lever and run, but there was no place to run to. That place, with its million mouths, was bound to get the safe, but those four couldn't bear to see it sink.
when he was on the yacht, and his

"Camphin gave in first. He was weak strength gave out about midday. He threw away his stick and laid down, but Fulton made him get up again. Then he fell down again, and he couldn't struggle onto his feet. We didn't stop to help him, and we didn't see him again.

"Can you picture the rest of us going backward and forward over that spot? They were all weak, but they wouldn't leave the safe. They had been guessing too long at the contents of that iron box.

"Camphin's odd disappearance didn't trouble 'em, but every time the safe started to sink they'd spring forward like fiends. The thing had a three-inch casing of mud on it then, and you couldn't see Sir Creswell's coat of arms and the gold letters of that motto of his. *Quantum vis,* eh? They were getting the true meaning of that motto just then.

"We kept staggering behind the safe all day, and then the night came down on us again. There wasn't a sign of a sail. The ocean was lying there quietly, like a wolf that has a man up a tree, and thinks that the end is pretty sure. I guess we were all insane, then.

" 'Long about midnight, Brennan got tired of working, and Fulton punched him. Fulton was a devil. He had tore all his clothes off, so that he could work better, and his bare body was covered in a coating of mud, like the safe. When he fell down you couldn't tell him from the ground. We were all pretty near like that.

"Brennan began to cry when Fulton hit him, and he struck at the mate with his stick. Fulton sprang at him, and Brennan ran away. White and I kept the safe from sinking till Fulton came back. He brought Brennan's lever with him.

"Say, don't you think that parson was right when he said that crime and punishment grow on the one branch?

"We had to work a bit harder that night. The island was all mucked up with us tramping over it, and the safe couldn't be left a minute. I don't know whether it was my youth or whether it was because I didn't worry when I saw the cursed box slipping, but I was standing the fatigue better than White or Fulton. They could hardly stand, and the wonder is that they lasted through the night.

"The dawn was coming up from 'way over the Solomon Islands when White gave out. Money's the devil. He pushed the safe forward, and then fell down on his face, and stayed there. I don't know how long he stayed; Fulton didn't give me time to look behind.

"Fulton was a shrieking maniac then. He rushed that ugly mass of cinders and wrestled with it like as if it was alive. *Quantum vis,* eh? I tried to run, but he knocked me down with his pole and stood over me till I got on my feet again. He seemed to have the strength of three men, and he rushed the safe up and down the island. He was blinded with the cinders. I could have killed him then, but it didn't seem worth the effort. The pace was too fast to last, and it looked as if the island would win in the end.

"I don't know what time it was when the safe stuck. It burrowed its way down, inch by inch, and the slush around it started to boil. Fulton yelled and cursed. He flung away his lever, and clutched at the thing with his bare hands. But the safe had got a move on that time. The mouth sucked at it, and it slid away from his grip, looking like a devilish, human-looking horror as it went. It frightened me.

"'Let it go!' I yelled, but Fulton wouldn't. He sprang on one end of it, and tried to tip it over on its side by dancing on it, and he screamed out to me to lend a hand. Do you guess what happened? That infernal thing lurched over suddenly, tossed Fulton on the cinders, and before he could scramble out of the way it had pinioned his two legs!

"I remember that I kept rolling over and over, so as to save my strength and rest myself, and in the afternoon I staggered to my feet and looked out to sea. A schooner was so close to the shore that I thought it was a dream, but they saw me when I waved my shirt, and I tumbled into the boat before it touched the land.

"That's all. It was a copra boat, beating down to the Marshall group, and they nursed me for a week or two. But I didn't mention anything about the safe. I did wrong. I know now. Why, God dealt with that five like He did with the Egyptians in the Red Sea, didn't He? And I had a narrow shave, just because I didn't try to block the game."

Kenyon stopped and stared at the damp patch on the plaited mat where the liquor had soaked through. The Malay filled his glass, but he took no notice. Presently, he put his head down on the table, and, covering his face, he sobbed quietly. I stood up, paid the score to the sleepy Malay, and stepped out softly, leaving behind me the man who had seen a miracle and never reported it.

The Voice of St. Patrick

By H. R. Durant

Author of "Houlihan and His Enemy," "The Ringer," Etc.

The Seventeenth of March! What good Irishman can forget the date? There is a whole lot of inspiration in the name of St. Patrick—and Mr. Durant proves it in this brisk little story of an Irishman who after two months' residence in New York is offered a thousand dollars for one evening's work on the eve of St. Patrick's day

IT was the noon hour in the huge freight shed on the pier. Sitting about on cotton bales and boxes were the husky stevedores enjoying their midday relaxation of smoking, while viewing an entertaining athletic exhibition on the part of the more strenuous members. Outside, the chill wind of early February sent the cakes of river ice grating against bulkhead and piles, and the rumble and whistle of passing ferryboats continued without intermission, but those within the shed were dead to the outside world.

Just now attention centred upon four men sprawled on the splintered planking of the floor. Three of them were busy in the hard task of keeping the fourth member of the party flat on his back. Back and forth rolled the struggling quartette, panting and grunting with the strain of the contest, and occasionally giving vent to good-natured curses.

From the spectators came such remarks as: "Good man, Paddy; good man!" "At him, Cassidy!" "Ha-roo! Ye hov' him—no, by gorry—thot Morrisey's a stout divil!" according as the different antagonists temporarily gained an apparent advantage. It was evident that the man underneath was a giant in strength, for he continually bounded the men from his bulging chest as if they had been rubber balls, but he could not quite free himself from all three at once.

Finally, by a quick movement, he pinned a man at each side of him with his arms, and, as the third fell on him, the giant wrapped his legs about the other's body and held him fast, absolutely helpless.

For a moment there was a mighty, silent struggle, as the three tugged and squirmed to get loose, but they were held in a viselike grip. Gradually their efforts ceased. Morrisey looked up at the spectators and grinned.

"Ah, ha! You're th' laddy buck!"

"'Tis a champeen wrastler ye' should be, Morrisey!" came from the gallery in quick approval.

"Phew!" panted Morrisey. "'Tis th' foine wrastler Oi'd be! They can't get up—but, be gorry, nayther kin Oi!"

"Have done, have done—will yez?" cried a voice they all knew well, but least expected to hear at this time. It came from one of two men who now stood a short distance from the group lying on the rough planking. In a twinkling the four unwound themselves and scrambled to their feet. It was Connarty, the dock boss, who had spoken. The other man was a stranger.

"Come out av thot—ye know better thin t' be shmokin' on thim bales av cotton!" continued Connarty to the others. "If Oi see anny more av it Oi'll—Oi'll tie a can t' iv'ry dom wan

av yes! Grab holt av yer trucks now an' be riddy fer th' phwhistle, d'yez moind?"

The men scattered obediently, Morrisey among the number; but a word from Connarty held him. For a moment the boss eyed the red-faced stevedore, who stood confused but without sign of fear.

"Thot's him!" said Connarty to the stranger. "Luk him over. Sure, he's big enough to bate th' head aff av an illephant."

From head to foot the stranger leisurely surveyed the big dock hand. In truth, Morrisey was a man well worth attention. His head was round and small, at least it appeared so in comparison with his thick chest and wide shoulders, and the ill-fitting "spring bottom" trousers could not hide the flat hips and thick legs which filled them almost to the bursting point. A rough blue-flannel shirt, rolled to his elbows, disclosed formidable arms corded and ridged like an ocean liner's hawser, which reached nearly to his knees. Connarty finally spoke.

"Morrisey, shake han's wid Mr. McGovern, a fri'nd av moine that wants t' talk business wid ye. He's all roight, an' ye kin go broke on annythin' he says."

Morrisey grasped McGovern's hand with a vigor which showed itself in the latter's answering wince.

"Connarty's right," said McGovern. "I have a little business which means a big bunch of dough for you."

"Dough is money," Connarty explained for the benefit of Morrisey. Then he added to McGovern: "Ye see, he ain't been over more'n a couple av months, an' he ain't familiar wid our Amerrican speech."

"Yes, I see," answered McGovern in an absent-minded manner. He was still critically eying the powerful-looking stevedore, and was lost in a maze of reflection, when Morrisey suddenly blurted:

"Heh—be gorry, Oi'll bet ye'll know me th' nixt toime ye see me?"

McGovern laughed, but Connarty growled:

"Shut up—ye big granehorn!"

"Oh, let him alone—he's all right," said McGovern. "Suppose we get out of this?"

"There goes wan o'clock," said Morrisey.

"Niver moind th' toime," said Connarty. "We'll go over t' Hurley's back room an' talk ut over."

"Talk phwhat over?" asked Morrisey.

"Yer're goin' t' hov' a new job," explained Connarty, "an' we——"

"Is ut betther nor this wan?" Morrisey asked suspiciously.

"Well, I should say it was," answered McGovern. "You can earn as much at it in five minutes as you could working steady on this dock for a year."

This was too much for the stolid Morrisey to grasp at once, albeit he blinked in wonder as the full magnitude of the prospective job dawned on him. Then he finally said:

"Well, lade me to ut!"

They walked along the pier, stopping once to have Morrisey step on the scales near the agent's office, where the beam showed that the big Irishman weighed two hundred and fifteen pounds. Then they made a bee line across the car tracks to Hurley's back room.

"A quart," said McGovern curtly to the bartender who stuck his head in the door. The "quart" soon came, served in beer glasses, and warm, but the phlegmatic Morrisey gulped his down in unfeigned delight.

"Ye are *now* dhrinkin' champagne!" Connarty informed him grandly, "an' whin ye go back home ye kin tell thim thet ye hod champagne fer loonch, d'ye moind, now?"

"Yis, yis—so 'tis," answered Morrisey. "Sure 'tis great shtuff, all roight, an' 'tis betther'n whisky. In the ould counthry a dhrop av whisky w'u'd put me in thot shape Oi'd bate up half av County Kerry afore dark, but thus—thus, heh, be gorry—thus electhric jooce make me feel loike—loike Carrnegy in an air ship."

"So you were something of a fighter across the pond, were you?" asked Mc-

Govern, meanwhile eying Morrisey keenly.

"Sure, Oi'm big enough t' lick an ould woman, ain't Oi?" Morrisey answered with a grin. Then he brought down one massive fist on the sticky table with a bang which made the room fairly tremble as he declared:

"Oi can bate any man in th' worrld Oi—Oi can hit!"

Any further manifesto was stopped by the bartender's rough voice, which came to them in peremptory tones over the imitation mahogany partition:

"Hey, there! Wot in hell youse guys doin'? Cut out dat rough-house comedy—it's no good!"

Morrisey half rose in his chair.

But McGovern held him with a restraining hand. "Never mind the barkeep," he said. "That's the way he has to keep order. But you were saying something about fighting, and that's the job I've got for you."

"A foightin' job, by Mickey!"

"You've said it—a fighting job! How would you like to have one?"

"Will a duck shwim?" replied Morrisey. "But sure, ivery wan has t' foight fer a job in thus country, an' thin foight ag'in t' holt ut!"

"Very true," said McGovern, "but here is one job all in one fight, and for it I'll pay you—one thousand dollars!"

Morrisey relaxed limply in his chair and stared at McGovern with unblinking eyes.

"Did you get that? *One thousand —dollars!*" McGovern added, with an increasing emphasis on each word, "to put in your pocket and—sail back to Ireland, eh?"

After a long pause, Morrisey leaned toward McGovern and said slowly:

"'Tis not makin' game av me, ye arre?"

Connarty broke in hastily: "Hov' sinse, man; hov' sinse! Th' gintleman is as honust as th' day is long! Come, wake up!"

"Connarty is right," said McGovern. "The job is waiting for you."

Then Morrisey spoke as though to himself: "'Tis a home Oi'll hov, an' chickens, an' pigs, an'—Norah!" He straightened up. There was a new glint in his eye. "An' Oi'm waitin' fer thot same job!"

"Good!" said McGovern. "Now, listen! I want to engage you to take part in a boxing match with a man named Jenkins. The match will be for twenty rounds——"

"A proize foighter ye'd hove me be, w'u'd ye?" exclaimed Morrisey.

"You've struck it—a prize fighter, but only for one fight. I'm in the sporting business. I promote prize fights—that is, I go around and match fighters, hire the hall, and all that, and sometimes I make more money—ahem—if my man loses, see?"

"No?" cried Morrisey, with a question in his tone. "How th' divil kin ye win be losin'?"

"Easy enough. Simply by betting money that my man *will lose!* Now do you see?"

"Yis, about as much as a blin' man! Ah, phwhat do Oi care about yer bettin'! Ut's th' t'ousand dollars Oi want. How do Oi get ut?"

"Well, here's this game in a nutshell. You are a greenhorn from Ireland, and your name is Morrisey!"

"Sure, an' it's mesilf knows thot!"

"Kape shtill, ye sassenack!" commanded Connarty.

"I will have it announced that I have brought over Morrisey, the Irish heavyweight champion, to fight Jenkins. *You* are Morrisey, the heavy-weight champion! Now, do you see?" demanded McGovern.

"Oh; 'tis a shkin game, is ut?"

"Of course not," replied McGovern. "You are Morrisey, and you may be the Irish champion for all I know. However, the point is that I pay you one thousand dollars to be known as such, and you are to lose the fight."

"Be Mickey! But s'pose Oi don't lose?"

"Don't worry—you'll lose, all right!"

"Divil th' bit do Oi care. 'Tis th' t'ousan' dollars Oi want t' win—not th' foight! Whin is ut t' be?"

"One month from to-day, which will be the sixteenth of March. You will have to go in training at once. I will

provide a trainer for you. His name is Red Kelly, and no one alive knows more of the business than he does. I'll pay all your expenses. All you have to do is to mind Red Kelly, and keep your mouth shut. The papers will be full of a lot of hot air about you, and the battles you've won. But pass all that junk up. Just you look wise and say nothing. Leave the rest to me."

"An' whin do Oi git me t'ousand?"

"As soon as the fight is over. Of course I'd give it to you now only that I'm not sure you'll be there. In order to protect myself I must hold off payment until your work is done. I guess that finishes all the details. You go home now and wait for Red Kelly. He'll be around to see you to-night, and remember—don't talk to any newspaper reporters, or say anything to anybody about the fight!"

After Morrisey had gone, McGovern ordered another quart. "That was pretty soft, wasn't it?" said McGovern with a broad grin.

"Soft as mush," agreed Connarty. "Say, Mack, are ye goin' t' giv' him all thot money fer it?"

"Forget it, Con. I'd like to see myself blowing a thousand on that thickhead. When the fight is over, our friend Morrisey can step on an egg and —beat it!"

When they parted, half an hour later, it was fully understood that Connarty was to go among the different orders of the Hibernians and start interest in the coming match between Jenkins, one of the best heavy weights, and Morrisey, the new Irish champion.

They figured that all true Irishmen would support Morrisey as befitted brother patriots, and that McGovern could send his agents among the many members of the A. O. H. and reap a golden harvest by betting on Jenkins. The latter was sure to win. Morrisey had a dead man's chance.

McGovern knew that his well-paid press agent could be depended upon to keep the sporting pages of the yellow press full of the prowess of Morrisey, the Irish champion, and that by the time the public discovered it had been hoodwinked, the winning bets would be added to McGovern's ever-swelling bank roll. And as for Morrisey—he could be in no position to say anything, since he was now a party to the deception, and more culpable, really, than any one else.

The next morning Red Kelly and Morrisey took quarters in a road house convenient to the city, and began the usual training routine. The advance notices of the press agent appeared, calling attention to the unheralded arrival of "a fighter who seemed destined to be a world's champion, and who, in all probability, would be matched to box Jenkins before the club offering the largest purse and best facilities."

This was followed by the announcements that a match had been made for one thousand dollars a side before the National A. C., to take place on the night of March sixteenth; that Morrisey's training was being done in practical seclusion; that the betting favored Morrisey on account of the wonderful form he displayed to the favored few who had been allowed to see him work out.

The result of all this booming was followed by a mad desire by all sport-loving Irishmen to bet their money on Morrisey, as McGovern had predicted. Had any good judge of fighters been allowed to witness Morrisey and his trainer at work, it is doubtful if the ignorant stevedore would have received backing for a penny.

The first time they put on the gloves and struck an attitude Red Kelly had a fit of laughter. Morrisey put up his hands as though beseeching high heaven for aid.

"Phwhat are yez laughin' at?" demanded Morrisey, bristling at the other's levity.

"At you," replied Kelly. "You're as graceful as a cow drunk on apples!"

"Is thot so?" retorted Morrisey. "Lave us see ye put a han' on th' cow?"

The challenge was no sooner said than Morrisey's head rocked back from the force of Kelly's straight left. It stung the big Irishman, and, with a roar, he started after his small trainer

with the speed of a runaway rhinoceros and all the latter's grace of action. But Morrisey was pursuing an elusive bee which lighted on him anon and stung viciously on both body and face, and all the while Morrisey swung his arms like flails, only to beat the air in vain. For several moments this continued, until, with breath spent and his mind in a daze, Morrisey halted.

"Phwhere th' divil—are ye—ye rid-headed—shnake?" the big man panted.

"Look out!" cried Kelly, and then he roared again with glee as Morrisey threw up his hands in alarm. Then Kelly appeared in front of him, his freckled face abeam with good-natured laughter.

"I wonder what kind of a jaw you've got?" said Kelly.

Stepping back and measuring his big opponent with the eye of a hawk, Kelly stood on tiptoe, swung his right hand back of him, then brought it around with a full-arm swing, and landed it flush on Morrisey's prominent jaw. The big man never even blinked.

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Kelly. Thereupon he repeated the blow on the same spot, but again Morrisey showed no effect from that fearful swing flush to the point of the jaw.

"Do you mean to say ye didn't feel that wallop?" demanded the trainer in open-mouth amazement.

"Sure Oi felt ut," answered Morrisey, "loike Oi w'u'd a fly on me nose!"

Kelly yanked off his gloves and threw them on the floor with an expression of disgust.

"Then no more fer me to-day!" he declared. "I ain't goin' to break up my mitts on such a bean of solid granite as you got fer a head, that's what!"

"Phwhat is solid grannite?" asked Morrisey.

"Your head is, I guess," replied Kelly. "I've been in this game twenty years, and you're the first geezer what I ever copped plumb in the kisser with nothin' doin'. Why, say, that coon will have to use a sledge hammer t' put you away! That black feller's got a great job, *he* has!"

"Phwhat black feller?"

"The one you're to fight—Jenkins!"

"McGovern said nothin' t' me about th' man's color!"

"Ah, what difference does it make? I guess th' money'll be white enough fer you, won't it?"

"Ut will thot same," Morrisey answered with a grin. "An' to Norah, also, Oi'm thinkin'."

The expression in Kelly's face softened. "So there's a Norah, is there?" he asked kindly.

"There is thot! An' a foiner girrul don't breathe th' air av Kerry thin Norah!" Morrisey exclaimed with warmth. "As soon as Oi git me mooney fer this foight—back Oi'm goin' t' her an' three acres an' a cow."

"As soon as you get it, eh?" said Kelly. "And when is that to be?"

"Whin the foight's over, McGovern pays me."

"After it's *over!*" said Kelly significantly.

"Yis, afther ut's over—Oi get paid whin me worruk's done—that's roight, ain't ut?"

"Yes, that's all right—*if* you do. Well, no matter," he continued, "put on that sweater and hit the turnpike outside. A little road work is good for your appetite."

Then followed halcyon days for the embryo prize fighter. Kelly worked him as he would a big truck horse, and Morrisey responded to the treatment by eating like an elephant after a two weeks' fast. However, the trainer was unable to drill a single fine point of the game into him.

Morrisey was willing, but his mental equipment was insufficient to allow him to grasp the peculiar science of block, hit, and get away.

He was a glutton for work. He could strike a blow like the kick of an army mule, and whenever he grasped Kelly in the clinches he almost cracked the other's ribs. But in straight lefts, hooks, upper cuts, jabs, counters, shifts, and inside swings he was all at sea. Therefore Kelley confined himself to making his charge sound in wind and limb, and the night of the contest found the trainer rubbing down as fine a spec-

imen of manhood, physically, as one could find anywhere.

"Now, don't exert yourself to-night," Kelly admonished him. "Just take things easy. You're gettin' paid to lose, but that's no business of mine, and I don't care, as I ain't got a pickayune on it. None of these frame-ups for mine! I ain't lookin' fer sucker money. I'd like to see you win, but you got the chance of a snowball in hell. So just mind all I tell you, and don't do nothin' but what I say. In this bunch of grafters and strong-arm men I'm the only friend you've got, and I'll prove it if you do just what I say to-night. Understand?"

"Sure, Oi'll do what ye tell me, Rid!"

"Good! And now one thing more. There'll be one big yip from those pikers in the dollar seats as soon's they see you put up your dukes. You're a cheese of a fighter! They'll see it and yell bloody murder, but it's the money you're after, and pay no attention to the noise."

When McGovern came in to watch the final preparations, he found Kelly winding the American and Irish flags into a belt for Morrisey's waist.

"It's a bird of a house," said McGovern with a smile, "The cops have stopped them selling tickets. Every Hibernian in the city has a bet down on Morrisey, and maybe we won't clean up!" McGovern laughed.

"How much you got down?" asked Kelly.

"Oh, about five thousand," replied McGovern, "and some of it at two to one, at that. Looks like I'd be ten thousand to the good, with my share of the gate and all, which is going some!"

"Oh, you're a wise one, all right," said Kelly. Then across Kelly's face flickered a queer smile. It flickered again and went out. "What bout is on now?"

"Just a couple of dubs in the semi-final," answered McGovern. "Now let's get this thing over as soon as possible. The coon is going after this guy from the jump and'll put him away in a round or two. There'll be one awful squeal from that mob when they see Morrisey in action, but let 'em holler!"

Morrisey had apparently been busy with his dressing while this dialogue was going on, but he broke in with:

"An' do Oi wait here fer me pay afther ut's over, Mr. McGovern?"

"Yes, wait here for it," said McGovern, and winked deliberately at Kelly in a way which plainly said: "And you'll have a long wait!"

Kelly made no reply, but his thin lips suddenly tightened to a straight line, and he bent over to give Morrisey's legs a furious rubbing. When he stood up again his face was a dull red.

"Pretty blame hot in this dressing room," said McGovern, and then as a roar of human voices came to their ears from the outside, he added:

"I guess the semi-final is over. Be ready to come as soon as I send for you."

When the door had closed behind him, Kelly spoke to Morrisey in a half whisper.

"Now, get this straight, Mike, and get it quick! That McGovern is out to double-cross you. He don't mean to give you a sou fer this bout. He's goin' to beat you out of it—if he can! Now don't get excited. I know what I'm talkin' about, and I think we can put one over on him if you do just as I tell you. Are you on?"

"Oi'll get me pay or Oi'll—Oi'll——"

Kelly interrupted Morrisey's outburst by grasping the big man's arm.

"No, no, no!" he exclaimed. "That's bad stuff—it won't go. The money's the thing. The only way to get it is to wait here a long time, just as long as we can. Then, after we get in the ring, and you are seated in your corner, you declare yourself—say that you won't fight until the money is counted out to you, and stick to it. He will have to hand it over, because that howling bunch out there will just eat him alive if he is responsible for stopping this fight. Just listen to them," said Kelly, as a chorus of fierce yells reverberated through the building. "Those Irishmen are worse than ten thousand Indians."

Word came at this juncture that the ring was clear, and that Jenkins had started from his dressing room, at the other end of the house.

"All right," said Kelly, "we'll be there."

Five minutes later, came a hurry call, and again word was returned that they were coming. "They'll be getting sorer and sorer," explained Kelly, "and be ready fer murder when you get out there and refuse to fight till you get yours. But it'll be Mr. McGovern's funeral—not yours."

A moment later, McGovern bounded in the dressing room, fairly boiling with rage.

"Say, what's coming off here?" he shouted. "D'ye know that it's half-past eleven? This final bout oughter been started long ago. That gang out there is half wild now. What's the matter—losing his nerve?"

"Oh, no," said Kelly, "he ain't afraid of losin' his—*nerve!* There was a few things he didn't understand, and I was just puttin' him wise, that's all!"

"Well, it's a fine time to try and teach this dub, here, anything!" fumed McGovern. "Just listen to those gorillas!" he added, as a storm of wild yells arose outside. "It wouldn't take much to make them break loose and put the whole thing on the bum. Get him into the ring—*quick!*"

They followed McGovern along the crowded aisle, and their journey to the stage was accompanied by continuous applause. As soon as possible, Kelly got his charge through the ropes, and seated him on a chair across the ring from Jenkins, who now arose, and, walking over, extended one hand to Morrisey. The latter looked at the big negro, owl-eyed.

"Shake hands with him," said Kelly, under his breath, "and, fer the love of Heaven, don't get google-eyed over nothin'."

Morrisey shook hands and informed Jenkins he was "pl'azed t' m'ate him."

Jenkins sauntered back to his corner, his gold teeth gleaming as his face took on a broad grin.

"That certainly is the biggest thickhead I ever did see," he said to his trainer. "I'm apt to kill him, if I let go at that big jaw of his'n!"

Throughout the preliminaries incidental to all final bouts, such as tying on the padded gloves, stamping shoes in the powdered resin, and walking to the centre of the ring to be instructed by the referee concerning the rules of the contest, the great crowd was becoming more and more hungry for a sight of the fighters in action. Finally, impatience gave way to clamor, and they whooped it up with a free voice.

The referee finally nodded to the timekeeper, but before the latter could sound the gong, Red Kelly held up one hand.

"What now?" demanded the referee, crossing to Kelly's corner.

"He says he won't start until he gets his share of the purse!" explained Kelly.

McGovern was hastily summoned from the box office and apprised of the reason for the further delay.

"What!" he screamed, with a string of oaths. "Do you think I'm going to let you hold me up for the coin before you deliver the goods?"

"Oi want me pay!" said Morrisey doggedly, "'r Oi don't foight!"

McGovern suddenly bent over the pail on the corner of the platform, and grasped a large bottle of cold tea.

"You big stiff!" he yelled, "you'll double-cross me, will you?" and he raised the bottle on high. But Kelly was upon him in an instant, grabbing the bottle, and hurling McGovern to the floor.

The incident, being in full view of everybody, created an uproar instantly. Cushions went sailing about, chairs were broken, and pandemonium reigned. The crowd soon learned of Morrisey's demand, and then frightful curses were hurled at McGovern. The promoter immediately saw, in spite of his blind rage, that the mob was now in a mood to tear him to pieces, and, thug at heart though he was, he quailed before the magnitude of the consequences.

"Bring me a thousand dollars in bills

from the box office!" he roared. "Going to stick me up for it, is he? We'll see about that!"

An attendant soon returned with the money, which was counted out in the centre of the ring, under the full glare of the electric lights. The amount was handed to Red Kelly, who shoved it in his trousers pockets. The audience was hushed to a dead silence while the money was changing hands, and when the yellow bills disappeared in Kelly's pockets a wild cheer went up. As McGovern climbed out of the ring, he hissed in Morrisey's ear:

"I hope Jenkins knocks your block off!"

The bell rang for the call of time, and out from his corner came the massive negro fighter, dancing on tiptoe, and displaying all the confidence of a man sure of his ability to beat his opponent to an unrecognizable mass.

A murmur of admiration arose as Morrisey's dressing gown fell away, and disclosed the figure of a Hercules.

Morrisey advanced toward his foe, and struck an attitude. Jenkins drove a straight left full to his nose, and leaped back as Morrisey made a laughable attempt to stop the blow. That was enough for the crowd! As one voice, came appalling oaths from every direction, interspersed with such epithets as:

"Cheese!" "Dead one!" "Punk!"

Many made a rush for the box office, determined to get their money back or take it out on the management, but all club officials, including McGovern, had disappeared. In the ring, the black fighter was punching his white opponent unmercifully; but the white man never flinched. Instead, he did his best to retaliate, but he might as well have tried to injure a shadow. The first moment of the round was a ludicrous sight, the balance was a pitiable spectacle.

"Shame, shame!" they cried. "Stop it—take him off!"

During the moment's intermission before the second round, the referee came over to Morrisey's corner, and said to Kelly:

"I was half hepped to some kind of a frame-up like this, and if I had the power, I'd call it no contest; but I can't! You oughter be 'shamed to be in on it!"

"Don't loose your nut," retorted Kelly, as he vigorously flapped a towel in Morrisey's face. "I ain't in on it, and—it ain't over yet," he added meaningly.

The second round was a repetition of the first, except that Jenkins twice knocked Morrisey clean off his feet, and laughed brutally as his willing antagonist picked himself up and returned to be beaten anew. People began to leave the hall. It was more than even a hardened ring follower could stand.

Just before the round ended, Jenkins measured his man with the critical eye of a mechanic, and landed a fearful right-hand swing, with all the strength at his command, squarely on Morrisey's wide jaw. He stood still long enough to see Morrisey topple over backward, as a mighty oak falls before the woodsman's axe; then turned toward his own corner. That finished it—Morrisey wouldn't come to for an hour after that punch!

But Morrisey bounced to his feet again, as though made of India rubber, and when he took his seat was actually grinning through his swollen lips. At this, the great crowd, as one man, began to applaud loudly. Outside, the measured clang of a loud bell began to sound, and Kelly suddenly became possessed of new life. Bending over, he cried in Morrisey's ear:

"Hear that bell? It's midnight—and now it's—the seventeenth of March!—*Saint Patrick's Day!*" the last with a loud shriek.

Morrisey stared back at him dumbly.

Kelly grabbed the fighter, and shook him. "A fine Irishman you are!" he shrieked again, "to let a black man lick you on *Saint Patrick's Day.*"

For another instant, the dense Morrisey sat gazing, with eyes which saw not. Then the full purport of Kelly's scorn broke upon his slow brain. His laggard wits gathered some semblance

of incipient intelligence, and he lurched forward in his chair.

"Saint Pathrick's Day?" he half breathed. "So 'tis—God save me! Now, be the Howly Saint Pathrick!" Then the crowd wondered why Morrisey suddenly waved a stained glove across his blood-splashed breast.

"Wait!—do what I tell yer!" cried Kelly in the fighter's ear, in a voice which was half hiss and half whistle. "I'll tell yer more after this round. There's th' bell—don't try to hit him, but get hold of him and rough-house him!"

It was a wild Irishman who bounded from his corner and sprang at Jenkins with giant leaps. Jenkins' look of amazement was cut short as Morrisey came against him full tilt, wound his sinewy arms about the big black body, and gave him a hug which threatened to break his backbone.

Not satisfied with this, Morrisey, turning sidewise, gave a mighty lurch. Jenkins' feet formed a parabola in the air as the two men sailed heavenward and came to the floor with a crash which was heard outside. Jenkins lay stunned, with Morrisey on top.

For a second, the crowd was stupefied at the manner in which Morrisey had "hip-locked" Jenkins. Then bedlam broke loose. The referee tugged at the infuriated Morrisey until he tore his arms from his half-unconscious adversary, got both men on their feet, and stood between them. The referee was speaking, but the audience had gone mad, and not a sound could be heard above the unearthly din.

McGovern stationed an attendant near the electric-light switch, with instructions to cut out every light in the building the instant he should raise both hands in the ring, toward which point he now headed with all possible speed. He jumped on the platform, and raised one hand for silence, and in the sudden hush which followed, said:

"The referee desires to say that he awards this fight to Jenkins on a foul, if you will keep still long enough to let——"

"Foul—nothing!" broke in the referee, with a roar. "It was an accident—fight on!"

To the roof went a frenzied yell from the half-insane mob. Instantly, McGovern raised both hands, and darkness fell on the whole building in the wink of an eyelash. There was a silent pause, punctuated by a dull, ringing sound, the fall of broken glass, and a body dropped heavily to the floor.

Suddenly, the lights were flashed up again, disclosing McGovern, prone and inert, on the floor of the ring. Near him were scattered pieces of glass. On his head was a bump the size of a goose egg. Several ushers dragged the unconscious man from the ring and carried him to the box office. The referee motioned for the fighters to go on.

Kelly leaned through the ropes, and screamed: "Sick him, Mike—eat up th' big coon!" Then he turned and dropped the neck of a broken bottle into the wooden pail at his feet!

Morrisey certainly did "sick him!" Waving his arms like a windmill, he ran at the half-dazed Jenkins. One glove descended full on the top of the negro's kinky skull, and his legs caved from the fearful welt. Another lunging punch hit him plumb in the chest, and he sailed backward against the ropes, as if butted by a runaway freight car. The taut ropes threw him forward again, to be met by another fearful smash; but this one Jenkins blocked.

Then pride and early training in his profession came to his aid, and he sought to meet Morrisey on his own ground. Planting himself, Jenkins punched right and left at the white man who faced him, and was carrying the battle bravely forward. For half a minute, it was blow meeting blow without cessation; but there was no man in the world just then who could stand toe to toe with Morrisey and make the latter give way.

A right swing landed between Jenkins' eyes, another forced his gold teeth down his throat, as from the smash of a mallet; and then, with the whites of his eyes showing his growing fright,

the negro backed from the furious onslaught of a maddened Irishman, who yelled between punches:

"Ha-roo fer th' siventeenth av March —Oi kin lick—a million naygurs—t' once on—Saint Pathrick's Day!"

From the tiers of seats came such endearing remarks as:

"Yee-ow-w! More power t' ye!" "Oh, ye Irish bear cat!" "Bite a hole in him, Mick!" "Bate him ag'in fer ould Oireland, me b'y!" "I c'u'd die lukin' at this!"

Jenkins sought for safety in clinching; but each time Morrisey shook him off, as a Newfoundland dog throws off water, then went at him with increased fury. It was more than the black man could stand, this blazing-eyed being, who fought with the strength of seven Samsons, and who was as immune from injury as an iron column. It was inhuman—uncanny.

Jenkins turned to escape the steady punishment, and as he did so a terrific blow landed in the middle of his broad back. He plunged forward between the ropes as a swimmer takes the water on a high dive, and landed in a heap on the main aisle. Men quickly lifted him to his feet; but he was insensible.

Kelly reached Morrisey just in time to prevent his charge jumping on top of Jenkins from the ring platform.

The referee took in the situation at a glance. Raising one hand, he said tersely:

"Morrisey wins!"

They tore the Irish flag from Morrisey's belt and bound it about his forehead in lieu of laurel. They rode him on high about the ring and hall, accompanied by ear-splitting "ha-roos!" and battle songs. Finally, in a glorious excess of joy, they fell to pounding one another, thereby affording Kelly and the fighter their first chance to escape to the dressing room.

"Kiss me, darlin'—ye little, ridheaded divil!" said Morrisey, once they were alone; and he reached for his trainer.

"Hey, nix on that mushy stuff!" cried Kelly, leaping away. "Save 'em fer Norah—and you start fer her this very day!"

"Oi will thot same, God bliss her!" said Morrisey.

Half an hour later, Morrisey motioned for Kelly to remove the hot towels from his swollen face.

"How did ye do it, Mickey?" asked Kelly, his face beaming.

"Och, sure, darlin', wasn't it yersilf thot guv me th' tip thot it wuz the sivinteenth av March! An' th' good Saint Pathrick he sez, sez he: 'At him, Moike—dhrive th' black shnake from forninst ye.' An' didn't Oi do as Saint Pathrick bid me?"

RUSSIA SAYS: "THOU SHALT NOT KISS"

RUSSIA is ruled by rigorous laws. The irony and humor of some of them come home to the foreign onlooker, while, of course, the Russians feel only the whip hand. The latest victim of anti-kissing in public law is a famous and all too impetuous Russian actress, Mademoiselle Trepoff, who actually had the temerity to kiss her mother in a street car.

One would have thought that even a magistrate or judge, or whoever administers cases of lawbreaking of that kind in Russia, would be melted by the beautiful picture of the reunion of a mother and daughter celebrated by a chaste salute, but Russians understand no jokes; the fine of ten rubles—about seven dollars—for a kiss in public conveyances, such as railways and street cars, was rigorously enforced.

A kiss in the street is penalized to the extent of five dollars, and a declaration of love sent by post card, if anybody is brazen-faced enough to do such a thing, is punished to the extent of three dollars and a half.

Beyond God's Country

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Piano Jim," "Raw Gold," Etc.

"Outside the cabin, the North spread hard and cold and white, cheerless and still as a dead world poised in infinite space. Within, light shone and warmth abounded; but there was neither gladness nor good will to men, nor any sounds save the purring draft in the stone chimney, the faint crackle of burning pine, and the soft slither of cards." That is the setting for one of the scenes in this little drama of life in the land of snowshoes.

ORAHAN whined remonstrance from one side of the roaring blaze. Smithy stroked his beard and spat viciously into the fire, now and then emitting a contentious g r o w l. Such, with slight variations, had been the programme since DeTurk dragged his burden into the cabin, half an hour earlier, and laid it on his own bed. Beyond an irritable word when they pressed him too hard, DeTurk had taken it in good part. Neither to his companions nor to the elemental fury which wolfed about the cabin did he pay much heed until he made the last turn of the bandage about the Indian boy's leg. Then he faced about. For the fifth time, he remarked:

"You fellows make me tired."

Orahan broke out afresh.

"Yis, but blame it, Toork, 'tis a divil av a while to spring, an' 'tis not me that wants to go wid an impty stummick, for the sake av anny buck Injun that iver shtuck his toe in a moccasin. We ain't got no grub to spare, Toork, me b'y."

"An' a blamed slim show t' git more if we run shy," Smithy added his mite.

"Well, how're you going to fix it, then?" DeTurk inquired mildly.

Smithy, the cold-blooded, turned his thumbs down with brutal suggestiveness.

"Or take the darned Injun to Fort St. John, an' let the Hudson Bay feed an' doctor him," Orahan promptly declared. Adding, *sotto voce:* "If it's you that are fool enough to make the trip!"

DeTurk eyed them silently. He looked the two of them up and down till they became uncomfortable, and wished he would turn his gloomy eyes elsewhere. He wondered why he had never before read them for the pygmy-souled brutes they were. If he, himself, should break a leg, be thrown helpless on their hands, an extra mouth to feed—very likely they would waste no time in debate, but knock him on the head and be done. With Orahan and Smithy, the instinct of self-preservation had dwarfed all other normal instincts. DeTurk knew the kind of men he had to deal with, but the knowledge had arrived a trifle late in the game.

The Indian, stoically enduring the agony of a fracture reduced without the mercy of anæsthetics, watched the three white men, while DeTurk simmered internally. He could speak and understand their tongue. He knew that two of them grudged his presence,

that they did not consider him in the light of an unfortunate who claimed their aid, but rather as a weight added to the burden already laid upon them by the North.

"Blast you!" DeTurk broke out, with a violence that made Orahan shrink back and Smithy start nervously. "You've got a nerve to propose anything of the sort. You've got a nerve to even think of taking a man with a broken leg two hundred miles overland—just to get rid of him. You'd bump him off, eh? And throw him out for wolf bait, I suppose?

"Let me tell you something. Indian or white man, he gets a fair shake right here in this cabin. He's entitled to it, and he gets it, because I say so. *Sabe?* You yowl about grub, you stinkers. Isn't there tons of meat on the hoof all around us? Damn your murdering hearts, I've lived for weeks on straight fish—frozen, at that. And you want to give a poor red devil a dose of out-and-out hell, or else kill him—because you're scared to death he'll eat up so much flour and tea and sugar that *you* won't have enough to carry you to spring. Ugh! You make me sick to look at you!"

DeTurk's voice hardened and sank to a lower key as his feelings crystallized into speech. His whole attitude implied a threat of summary developments. So Orahan and Smithy read it. And they were in no wise keen for a mix-up with DeTurk. He had unconsciously dominated them both, from the inception of the partnership. Smaller than either Orahan or Smithy, DeTurk bristled with that intangible quality called "force."

Orahan chafed against the fact, but he always felt an overpowering impulse to yield any point to DeTurk when the smaller man's face began to draw into certain lines. Also, a matter probably as important as the question of nerve, DeTurk was the only practical miner of the three—and Orahan and Smithy were in the North hunting gold, not trouble. Smithy had once remarked to Orahan that DeTurk did not seem to care which he found.

Orahan and Smithy knew what they wanted. They knew, too, that grub, plenty of it, was a prime factor, a requisite to the pursuit of their object. And they grudged every morsel which they did not themselves consume. What was one Indian more or less, anyway? It exasperated them to see DeTurk play the good Samaritan—at their expense, they conceived. But since getting rid of this crippled native meant coming forthright to loggerheads with DeTurk, neither Orahan nor Smithy had much choice.

"Oh, all right, me b'y," Orahan conceded. "I'm just tryin' to show ye that feedin' the noble rid man'll maybe put us in wan divil av a hole. But if ye think he can't stan' a thrip to the post—why——"

Orahan ended with a gesture, indicating that he put it up to DeTurk. As for Smithy, he merely flashed a surly look, spat with increased emphasis into the fireplace, and growled:

"You're the doctor, I guess."

DeTurk relaxed. Seating himself, he lighted his pipe and tried to analyze his feelings, wondering why at that particular moment he felt such a revulsion against his partners. Brutes, all belly, without sympathy or imagination; that was his summing up. It amazed him to discover that he had never before lifted the veil of their personalities. It had come as a sort of illumination, a disagreeable fact suddenly made plain. He did not like the idea of spending a Northern winter cooped in a twelve-by-fourteen cabin with that pair. But there was no avoiding it.

DeTurk had one faculty which they lacked; when he set his hand to anything, he saw it through to the bitter end, with no expenditure of energy in useless complaining. What did gall him was that he would have to sit through six months of deep snow, with one hand on the safety valve, whereas he had looked forward to a winter tided over with cards and good-natured argument as an offset to the exigencies of solitude and the hardships of hunting meat.

DeTurk banished that cheerful vista with a regretful sigh. Taking it by and large, DeTurk held human life cheaply—but he could not quite grasp the viewpoint of two brutes who would put a broken-legged man up against a two-hundred-mile journey, when the slightest movement meant pain that brought sweat beads out on his copper skin. And he could not escape the uncomfortable conclusion that they would do the same for him, under like conditions.

He glanced at the Cree, and caught the boy's immobile face turned upon him. Neither pain nor any sense of gratitude glimmered on the set features. Only the wide, dark eyes betrayed curious expectancy. DeTurk knew that the boy understood every word. He arose and set a cup of water where the Cree could reach it. Then he put on coat and mitts, and went out to chop wood for the supper cooking—in reality to blow off steam in some form of action, for his temper was the sort that rises steadily under pressure.

Orahan and Smithy played interminable games of cribbage after supper, mumbling the count as they pegged. Outside of that, no one spoke. Insensibly, a lining up of forces had taken place that afternoon—Orahan and Smithy against DeTurk and the Indian boy.

DeTurk felt it, understood it, if the others did not. Before, they had simply been three men seeking gold, working as a unit to a common end, which is vastly different from two parties split upon a grievance. But DeTurk did not care. He despised the other two. He meant to do the right thing, according to his lights, and let it go at that.

Morning dawned clear. The storm chill dissipated in the breath of a warm southwest wind. By noon, only pools of slush in the low places and thin ice in the backwaters of the Finlay remained to mark the storm. When they cleared the table of dinner, DeTurk threw open the door and surveyed the river. Overnight he had relapsed into an impersonal attitude toward his partners.

"That was just a flurry, after all," he said. "We'll get a few days' prospecting yet, before she gets right down to business."

"Like t' strike a bar that'd pan out some," Smithy grunted, struggling into his jacket. "Come handy for grub."

Orahan snickered. DeTurk's lips formed a tart rejoinder, but he smiled instead. Naturally, the food bugbear would loom large before Smithy and the Irishman until spring was actually come. DeTurk was not the man to squabble over mere pettiness.

"I guess I'll go look up a deer or caribou, and jerk the meat," he said equably, as the others took up shovel and pan. "I'll have something cooked when you get in to-night."

So, after a fashion, they bridged that difficulty. A week of fair weather followed that first hint from the gods of storm. The Finlay spread shallow between timbered banks, baring long reaches of graveled shore line and gray sand bars.

On these Orahan and Smith plied shovel and pan, eagle-eyed for the yellow dust, which so far had eluded them save in "color" and stray specks. It was there, they knew. The Finlay, Sicannie River, Goat Creek, every upper tributary of the Peace, had given up treasure to adventurers such as they. But from year to year the bars shifted under the impetus of roaring floods, and what would pan big one year might be barren the next.

The gold was there, swirled hither and yon in the shifting black sands. One good bar meant a stake, wherefore Orahan and Smithy nosed the river for the one good bar. And, in the meantime, while the dying Indian summer lay over the land, DeTurk's pan and shovel rusted at the cabin end. He hunted, and made "jerky" of the wild meat, and cared for his broken-legged Cree.

Winter closed in with a sudden, silent, overnight tightening of the frost, a slow sifting of harsh snow particles through an atmosphere that cut like a knife. The Finlay froze from bank to bank in thirty-six hours. For a

week, the North toyed with its weapons. The land seemed to stiffen, to congeal degree by degree—until the mercury in Orahan's cheap thermometer reached the bottom and smashed its bulb.

Then, pouf! a Titan-lunged gale leaped from the heart of the Barren Grounds, whistled and whined and tore at the woods for four days, and when it went whooping away through the gaunt mountain passes, all the world lay, white and glittering, in the eye of a faded sun.

That finished prospecting. Orahan and Smithy and DeTurk put out a string of traps and deadfalls, for fox and marten and wolf. In the brief span of daylight, they tended these, sought caribou, chopped firewood. Through the long evenings the two played pinochle and crib. DeTurk smoked his pipe. Theoretically, the dove of peace brooded in the cabin. Actually, the tide of resentment ran strong.

Skin-of-a-Bear's leg bone knitted. He passed from the helpless stage to sitting up, eventually to hobbling on a crutch. And he was a living prod to Orahan and Smithy. He represented an issue on which they had been defeated. He ate their grub—grub that they might need badly ere spring—grub that might spell fortune.

DeTurk sensed the atmosphere. But it did not disturb him much. He was so absolutely sure of himself that he rather underestimated the potentiality of the other two. He smiled to himself at their drawing away from him, and their effort to conceal it. So long as they kept their feelings to themselves, DeTurk did not care. All he wanted was peace till spring. Then they could split the grub with him and make their own trails. Whereas, DeTurk had previously made his plans embrace his partners, now he made plans which bore only upon himself. Which was precisely what Orahan and Smithy were doing.

DeTurk felt no particular distrust. He accepted the situation with philosophic calm. And that semi-detached frame of mind carried them over the angularities of existence without open clash, until a little, red calendar on the wall showed the twenty-fourth of December. By that date, Skin-of-a-Bear, the Cree, could walk upon snowshoes.

DeTurk sat in his accustomed place at one side of the flaming hearth, conjuring up other Christmas Eves in a land remote, where roses and fuchsias turned gorgeous petals to a friendly sky. Opposite him, Orahan and Smithy pegged count on a crib board in mute absorption. Christmas meant nothing to them. Between, Skin-of-a-Bear humped, like a tired tailor, on the clay floor, staring into the blaze.

Outside the cabin, the North spread hard and cold and white, cheerless and still as a dead world poised in infinite space. Within, light shone and warmth abounded, but there was neither gladness nor good will to men, nor any sounds, save the purring draft in the stone chimney, the faint crackle of burning pine, and the soft slither of the cards as Orahan or Smithy shuffled and dealt.

Orahan paused to refill his pipe at the end of a game. As he reached for the cards, to deal again, Skin-of-a-Bear straightened, and spoke.

"Let us make talk, *monyas,*" he said, looking up at DeTurk.

"All right, old boy," DeTurk answered good-naturedly. "Blaze away."

Orahan held the deck in one hand. Stirrings of curiosity prompted him to listen. So far the Indian had outdone them all in silence. Even Smithy faced about on his stool.

"Injun heap bad shape when white man find, with leg broke. Caught under stick—all same fox in trap," the Cree began. "All same dead Injun, me, if white man no help. But white man help! bring here to him tepee; make much medicine, so Skin-of-a-Bear him all same new. Feed me, make for medicine me, take care me—all same own people. My heart good. All same much glad."

"Yuh durn well ought t' be," Smithy cut in, and spat pettishly in the fire.

"Now Skin-of-a-Bear go back to own tepee, far off, on Lake Hungry Bear. White men need grub. Injun eat heap much."

DeTurk silenced Orahan with a look, before the Irishman's blatant mouth was well opened. Skin-of-a-Bear rose to his feet.

"No have dogs, no have furs, no have grub. No can make white men present to show my heart good," he continued. "But me know what white men seek in this country. White men no care for cold or heap snow or empty belly when they look for yellow dust. Skin-of-a-Bear know yellow dust heap big white man's medicine. Skin-of-a-Bear no have dogs, no furs, no grub to show his heart good—but he——"

He paused, and glanced from one to the other searchingly.

"Skin-of-a-Bear tell white men where he find heap yellow dust."

DeTurk looked into the fire, unmoved. But Smithy and Orahan bent forward, lips parted in expectancy.

"Go on, go on," cried Orahan. "Where is it?"

Skin-of-a-Bear fixed his eyes on DeTurk.

"That many snows ago"—he held up one outspread hand and two fingers of the other—"my father make winter tepee on Lake Mooswapiton. Me heap small Injun, but remember just same. One creek run to lake from big mountains. There we hunt, my father and Two Wolves—all same one. Bimeby the snow is melt, and big water run. With big water come men from over mountains—small men, with yellow skin. Not white men. Men with skin like new moccasin, and long hair in braid down back, and eyes like this."

He held his two forefingers, to indicate the Mongolian slant.

"Chinks, huh," Smithy muttered.

The Cree went on, speaking to DeTurk:

"They dig on the bank and shake the sand in a dish, all same you. For many days we see um. Bimeby they come to our camp and make sign talk for meat. We give them meat. They come for more. One sleep they come to my father's tepee, and steal two dogs. In the morning——"

The Cree boy looked reflectively into the fire for a brief space. A grim smile lurked at the corners of his mouth.

"In the morning, Big Knife, my father, and Two Wolves go down to the camp, and ask for dogs. Men with yellow skin laugh and show teeth. Injuns have gun under blanket. Bang! Bang! Bang! Yellow skins all go dead—quick. Then we come away, to trade furs with the Company.

"Last snow I hunt there—same place. Heap many snows since, but Injun remember, and find where yellow skins die. I look for um, when snows melt. All bones. But men with yellow skins have heap yellow dust from creek. I see um all lie by bones, where wolf scatter on ground, all same shine in the sun. Injun, Skin-of-a-Bear, tell you how find that creek. Heap yellow dust there—white man's medicine. One white man there now, shake sand in dish, ketchum plenty yellow dust. Lots more for you."

"What's that ye say?" Orahan broke in. "A prospecther there now? Bad cess t' him! Where's the place, me b'y? That's what we're afther."

"Let him get at it in his own way, you chump," DeTurk warned. Then, to the Cree:

"If Skin-of-a-Bear knows the place, it is good. The yellow dust *is* white man's medicine."

"Injun show you all same this way." He took up a splinter of pine, and drew marks in the earth floor. "This way, two sleeps' walk. Then down long creek, call Ah-no-tah, three sleep. Bimeby all flat country. Then *this* way, till you come to heap trees. This him Lake Mooswapiton. Up here creek. See um? *Here* men with yellow skins go dead. This where one white man make cabin—four, five moons gone. You find um."

"Good Lord, I wisht we knowed this sooner," Smithy mourned. And Orahan, shooting his lower jaw forward: "The close-mouthed divil, t' sit here

nigh on three months, an' niver a word."

"One sleep more, and Skin-of-a-Bear go to his own tepee," the boy put in placidly.

"Say, Toork, s'posin' we have the rid b'y shtay an' take us to the shpot, himsilf," Orahan suggested. "Faith, an' if 'tis a straight tip, we'd betther be hurryin'—where there's wan white miner strikin' it rich, there'll soon be more. The gintlemin av the cabin'll not be lonesome long if there's gowld t' be had. If the Chinks struck it, we can."

"Great Scott, you're not crazy enough to start for there right now, are you?" DeTurk looked and voiced his surprise. "It'll be there in the spring."

"An' why not?" Smithy demanded excitedly. "If there's dust there—if a feller can bank on this Injun, why, I say, get to it. Oh, yuh needn't grin, Mr. DeTurk."

"That's me, be Mickey!" Orahan slapped his knee, and glared at DeTurk. "If the Injun knows where Chinks washed out dust enough to glitther in the sun afther it's laid for years —why, he don't say good-by t' us till he shows where 'tis. Not wid Danny Orahan!"

DeTurk raised his eyebrows, surveying them with frank impatience. He knew the creek and the lake, though his Northern wanderings had never led him to the exact spot. Furthermore, he could visualize the drear country that lay between, and he was not of a mind to buck unbroken snows simply because Orahan and Smithy burned with gold fever.

"No use getting worked up over it," he returned. "You can generally bank on an Indian giving it to you straight, in a case like this. But that creek won't get away. If there's a lone white man there now, the chances are good that he'll winter alone."

"I'm for the trail," Orahan flashed back, "if Smithy's game. Damned if it's me that fears a bit av snow."

"Yes," DeTurk replied, with a rising inflection on the word. "You've faced hard trails in your time, eh? Mushed in the North when it was sixty below, I suppose? Shucks! Let me tell you something, Orahan. I've had to do these things. I know what the North is. You don't. You never will till you've gone up against it at its worst. You can gamble that if there was anything to be won by making tracks I'd be in the lead. I'm not up here for my health, any more than you two. But when I size it up, I say it isn't worth the price we'll pay, just to be on the spot. Why, it's——"

DeTurk bit the last sentence in two. He did not quite know why. But he had what Smithy would have called a "hunch" not to tell them that he knew the place, that he could break a trail straight to Mooswapiton, if he were so minded, and he obeyed the prompting.

"I'm with Orahan," Smithy declared bluntly. "I'm game for anything he is."

"Game, hell!" DeTurk spluttered. "It's not a question of nerve. It's just the foolishness of tackling something that might turn out bigger than we are. We could do it if we had to—but we don't have to—at least, I don't. Hang it, stop and think. You fellows haven't covered your trap lines for ten days. Why? Because you just naturally hated to go up against a few miles of snowshoeing and the frost that chewed on your flesh. You said so. Yet you're hell-bent to hit the trail for God knows where; which means that you'll be up against it day and night for weeks. Have some sense. I'm going to stick—because there's nothing to be gained by getting there before the snow goes."

"Thin we'll split the grub an' dogs, an' ye can stay here—ye can stay here, an' be damned to ye!" Orahan shouted.

Smithy's bearded face cracked open to growl a second to the Irishman's declaration.

"So far as whacking up is concerned, I'm willing," DeTurk made placid reply. "But have you figured it all out? How are you going to locate the place?"

"The rid b'y here'll pay for his keep, I'm thinkin'," Orahan muttered significantly.

"Don't lose your head altogether," DeTurk snapped. "The Indian's going home."

"One sleep, Skin-of-a-Bear him go own tepee," the Cree put in. "Bimeby come back. Show white man trail to yellow skins' place."

He looked searchingly from one to the other.

"That's the idea, exactly," said DeTurk to his partners. "So you two may as well settle down. And for that matter"—he spoke diffidently, not sure whether it were wise to make the statement, but wishing to clear the atmosphere—"if he doesn't come back it won't matter. I never was there, but I know about where the lake is. I can find it from his description."

"Oh, I dunno," Smithy leered. "That's a pretty good stall uh yours, but I don't go much on it. I guess we'll have some say about Mr. Injun."

"Will you?" DeTurk's face blazed. He reached above his head to a peg where hung his old white-handled Colt. He drew the gun from its scabbard and shoved it inside the waistband of his trousers. "If the Cree wants to go home, you won't stop him," he remarked quietly. "Understand? There's no string on you two, if you're dead set to go. But I won't hit the trail with you on any such fool trip. And the Indian's going home, as he said."

Orahan subsided, muttering oaths under his breath, casting black looks at DeTurk. Smithy squinted at the fire, gnawing spitefully at his finger nails. DeTurk smiled, and refilled his pipe.

Morning dawned, with a rising temperature and a bleak, gray scud above. Skin-of-a-Bear went out of the cabin, sniffed the air, and grunted dubiously.

"Heap snow come," he declared upon reëntering. "Maybeso big storm. Heap bad for Injun hit long trail."

"You no go. Bimeby sun come. Good trail, then. You stay," DeTurk told him—whereat Orahan sniffed wrathfully.

The Indian humped in his accustomed position on the floor, sucking at his little stone pipe. Orahan and Smithy turned to cribbage again. DeTurk scraped the inch-thick frost from the one glass pane in the cabin, and peered out. Then he busied himself getting into a fur *parka*, double moccasins, and mittens.

"Goin' thravelin'?" Orahan injected a covert sneer into his tone.

"I'm going to hike over my trap line," DeTurk returned absently. "I don't think it will storm before night."

He did not notice the odd look which flashed between the others, or he might not have gone his way at ease. So far as DeTurk was concerned, the Mooswapiton incident was closed. He had defined his position; Orahan and Smithy could do as they pleased. And he swung out over his trap line, not so much because he was keen on the furs, but because he knew that a man cannot keep fit in the North if he spends his days mooning in a stuffy cabin.

The outer end of DeTurk's string of traps lay some eight miles downstream. Even should it storm, as it can storm in those latitudes, he could not miss the camp, for his way bordered on the Finlay's right-hand bank. So he paid little heed to the overcast sky, but plodded diligently to the uttermost deadfall.

Long before he reached it, the still air thickened with down-eddying flakes. When he turned, the fall had come to its zenith; it could snow no faster, for the flakes jostled one another for elbowroom in their flight. Two rods on either hand, the woods verged into misty nothingness. His tracks filled and vanished while he stood and looked at them. Withal, no breath of wind rustled through the forest; an eerie hush had settled upon the North.

It was no longer cold, measured by the forty-below-zero standard. Yet when DeTurk stood for a minute and saw the white veil close in upon him, and the fresh print of his snowshoes blur while he could count ten, he gave over thoughts of lugging home the

few marten in his traps. Instead, he bore down to the frozen levels of the river and set his face upstream, with the indistinct line of timber on one hand for guide.

What with the river windings and the hampering softness of the new snow, dusk was deepening the general grayness when he swerved from the ice and trudged across to the cabin.

Ten yards short of the door, something amiss brought him up standing. For a moment, he could give no name to his uneasiness. Yet something was wrong, some familiar thing missing. Then it came to him—the dogs. He whistled.

"Ho, Baldy! Prince! Ju-ju! Ho, Baldy! Ned!"

The thickness of the air deadened his call. His voice sounded puny, pitifully inadequate. His eyes, in one comprehensive sweep, seized upon and conveyed to his understanding certain details which warned him what to expect. From pegs on the walls between the door and window, the dog harness was missing. No light glimmered through the window panes of scraped deerskin. The chimney yawned to the sky, void of wavering smoke pennant.

DeTurk strode to the door, and threw it open. Silence, the hollow emptiness of an abandoned habitation, slapped him in the face. He closed the door, and struck a match. In its brief flare, he took stock of his plundered camp. Then he fumbled by the wall for a stick of dry wood, and, drawing the hatchet from his belt, split kindling in the fading light at the threshold.

The flare of the blaze enabled him to find a can of grease. A bit of cloth twisted to a wick gave him a lamp, wherewith he could make leisurely appraisal of his resources.

They were few enough. Orahan and Smithy had sacked the place, in the manner of loot-hungry soldiers. The bunks were stripped to the bottom layer of spruce boughs. Of the winter's provisions, they had left DeTurk one fifty-pound sack of flour, a canister of tea, some baking powder, and jerked venison; of bedding, one gray blanket, and a bearskin. These were piled on the table, and Orahan in ironic mood had placarded with a charred stick:

SO-LONG MISTER DeTURK

"The hounds!"

DeTurk eased his feelings in a whirl of blasphemous adjectives. Then he laughed harshly at his waste of words. Very likely they were pluming themselves on a double killing; they were bound for certain gold, and they were paying him for his dominance.

"But I'm still on the job," he muttered. "I'll show them a thing or two yet."

He divested himself of his outer garments, and made shift to cook a supper out of the limited means at hand. Afterward, he piled the fireplace till it roared defiance to the cold, and sat down to moody thought. Even when he rolled himself in the blanket and robe, he lay staring at the roof for a long time before falling asleep.

At daylight, DeTurk had breakfasted and was hard at work with hatchet and sheath knife to fashion a sled out of saplings and green caribou hide. He could winter at the cabin—perhaps—but he had no thought of doing so. If Orahan and Smithy had whacked fair, he would have settled back, and let them go. But they had outraged all DeTurk's conceptions of square-dealing—and that was the keynote to his action.

Moreover, he had passed his word that the Cree should go his way in peace, and that word he meant to keep. He had a month's grub, such as it was, a six-shooter and twenty-four cartridges—but, he told himself grimly, after he had overtaken Orahan and Smithy he would have more. In any case, he had faced harder trails with less.

The snowfall continued without cessation. Already eighteen inches of the new were superimposed upon the old, hardened layers. By noon, DeTurk finished the sled, lashed his food

upon it, boiled a last pot of tea, and set out.

It first occurred to him that he should bear straight for Lake Mooswapiton. But, again, he reflected that the Cree might be able to—and probably would—leave them in the lurch the first time their vigilance relaxed. In which case, neither Orahan nor Smithy would ever find the lake, except by blind chance. And DeTurk, for his own personal satisfaction, hungered to set eyes on them once more.

So he bore to the east until he felt reasonably sure that their track lay between him and the mountains, and then verged slowly north through the deep, new snow.

All that day it snowed, and that night. Dawn brought comparative clearness, a renewal of the frost-barbed atmosphere, and the premonitory sigh of a nor'easter. DeTurk plodded on, tiny icicles festooning his eyelashes and the furry edges of the *parka* hood, his shoulder sore from the backward lug of the sled rope, and his leg muscles aching with the steady sink and lift of the snowshoes.

When he camped at night, he chose a great bank, on the brink of a hollow, and, digging a hole to the frozen leaf mold, erected a wind break of boughs and gathered a great pile of dry wood —for DeTurk was weather wise. He sensed the portent of that growing sough in the forest; the little streamers of loose snow ribboning across open spaces warned him.

With dark, the storm cast off the leash, and the ranked spruce swayed humbly before its overlord, the north wind.

This camp endured for two days. Then the still, gnawing frosts came back to their own, and a heatless sun peered tentatively from a far horizon.

DeTurk reasoned that when he struck their trail he would be less than twenty-four hours behind. They, like himself, must, perforce, lie up through the storm. He could travel faster than Orahan and Smithy, he believed. The time he lost in swinging wide to the east would scarcely count. So he bore on through the clear, gripping cold of the days, and into the night till the stars blinked and the Northern Lights streamed above the pole. When he reached a point parallel with where the shifting snow would cease to hide their trail, he angled northwest, heading toward Mooswapiton. Thus he must cross their track.

He came to it almost in the first mile of his new slant, and he grunted amazement when it lay under his feet. Not the surprise of finding it, but the direction of their movement was what made DeTurk blink in puzzled thought. A single snowshoe track ahead, the print of another pair of snowshoes and one of moccasined feet behind the six-dog toboggan, ran plainly enough so far as the enclosing timber permitted visional evidence—but the way of the trail was not toward Lake Mooswapiton. Rather it bore easterly, toward Great Slave Lake, and ultimately the Barren Grounds.

"Huh!" DeTurk muttered, and fell in upon the beaten path. He could make time now.

He did, but it availed him nothing. The ashes of their next camping place revealed indubitably what lead he must overcome. Orahan and Smithy were moving under the spur. Yet their trail did not diverge.

Once, indeed, it turned sharply, and DeTurk, noting the change, smiled as he pictured the faces of the two when he should walk in upon them at the lake. But shortly their track swerved back to the old quarter, and he became aware that the half circle had been merely a detour to avoid a cul-de-sac.

Presently the stress of the trail began to tell upon DeTurk. The intense cold laid unseen, hampering hands upon him throughout the day, attacking savagely his fingers and toes, the exposed portions of his face. At night he shivered in his blanket and bearskin when the fire died. But he would not turn back. He cursed the frost and the snow, and Orahan and Smithy he cursed most of all—muttering blasphemous assurance that he would follow them to the Arctic Sea or to hell itself.

Strongly as he bucked the trail they maintained a thirty-six hours' lead which he failed to cut down. He lost count of the days. His flour dwindled, and the jerked meat ran out, so that he was forced to subsist largely on game got by the way. Lastly, in an evil hour, he stepped on the rotten ice over an air hole at the crossing of a creek, and before he could get dry wood and build a fire his wet foot froze to the ankle-joint.

Luckily, the flesh was not bitten deep. But he could no longer go on. He had no option but to fend off the cold with fire, and keep body and soul together with food until the swollen foot would bear the agony of use.

So for three days DeTurk brooded over his camp fire, railing at fate, rousing at times to gather dry wood with painful effort.

Then the inflammation lessened. He found himself able to discard the wrapping of blanket and draw on the thick woolen socks and the fur-lined moccasin. But each limping step brought a pang, and added to the score chalked up against Smithy and Orahan.

He no longer hoped to come up with them, unless some kindred accident stayed their passage—for a storm threatened, and the shifting drifts would blot out their track. He had no recourse but to strike for Mooswapiton, relying upon the lone white miner there. Then, if the two did reach the place, he would be ready for them. At that, he stubbornly decided to keep on until the trail ran out.

The north wind contested his advance ere he traversed five miles, and self-preservation drove DeTurk to camp again. The blizzard gathered strength, ravaging the dumb forest, whirling up the snow in mad revelry. That night the wind lulled and fresh snow began to fall.

At noon of the next day, DeTurk left his fire to stalk a cottontail rabbit, for his meat was gone. But the rabbit eluded him, and he wandered far in the brush in search of others. Eventually he succeeded in knocking down first one and then another with skillful casting of a stick; he did not dare waste cartridges on small game. Thus it was nigh dusk when he rekindled his fire. The falling snow still cast a diaphanous veil over the woods.

As the flame licked up among the twigs DeTurk straightened tensely. The crisp *pop* of a dog-whip impinged upon his ear-drums—or was it the crack of an overweighted branch? He listened, drawing back the hood of his *parka*. The faint *swoosh* of a gliding toboggan penetrated the murk. Hard upon that he saw the dim outline of a figure in blanket coat, stalking in the rear of a dog-team. DeTurk hobbled toward it, loosening the gun in its scabbard.

"How—how, *monyas!*"

Skin-of-a-Bear halted his six dogs and thrust a bared hand at DeTurk.

"Injun think you come like this. Me come look for you," he stated simply.

DeTurk in one glance took in the panting team, the heavy-loaded toboggan. The Cree carried his own rifle. Lashed on top of the load were three canvas gun cases. DeTurk shuddered, scenting a tragedy. He knew the way of primitive man.

"Come up to the fire," he said.

Skin-of-a-Bear urged the dogs on. At the camp he cast off the traces, and loosed the load lashings, drawing from thereunder flour and tea and dried fruit, and the saddle of a caribou.

"You heap hungry?" he infused a gentle friendliness into the tone. "Come long trail, you—not much grub. Me ketchum heap grub."

He chuckled dryly as he scooped up a kettleful of hard snow and set it by the flame to melt. DeTurk's gaze shifted from the Cree to the three rifles leaning against the load of provisions, and he felt a vague stirring of pity for the other two.

"How you do?" he asked Skin-of-a-Bear pointblank. "What happen white men?"

The Cree was pecking with a splinter at the bowl of his stone pipe. He filled and lighted it, a faint trace of amusement lurking at the corners of his thin-lipped mouth. Then he clasped his hands over his knees and remarked:

"Two white men heap dam fool. Injun fool um all time. Take um way off. They make Skin-of-a-Bear break trail all day. Sleep with white men, so——"

He made signs that Orahan and Smithy had slept on either side, with their wrists tied fast to his.

"Bimeby Injun ketchum good. Get gun. Make white man load toboggan. Leave um sack flour, tea, meat, one little gun, snowshoes. Leave um in heap big storm. No can find track. Fix um all same they fix you. Two white men have bad heart. Me come back find you."

One sack flour, tea, meat, a revolver—just what they had left him. De-Turk laughed at the exact justice of the Indian. Orahan and Smithy had a fighting chance. It was up to them.

"You're all right, Skin-of-a-Bear," he muttered. "If they don't make it, it's their own lookout. They had it coming. They have the same show they gave me."

"Got dogs, got plenty grub, got guns," the Cree returned placidly. "Now we find where men with yellow skins go dead. Show you where find heap yellow dust. Then Skin-of-a-Bear go him own tepee. *Wash-tay!* Good!"

TOP SPEED FOR AUTOS—FOUR MILES AN HOUR

MOST people think of the automobile as a comparatively recent innovation. No such thing! Devil wagons were known in England, and extensively used, eighty years and more ago. They took the form at first of self-propelled stage coaches, weighing from three to four tons.

Afterward lighter and more graceful vehicles were built, and regular passenger services were run, notably between Cheltenham and Gloucester, on which road an average speed of fifteen miles an hour was kept up for several years.

Of course, there were then, as now, plenty of enterprising Britons ready to cater to a popular want; and several big engineering firms built automobiles which were little if any inferior to many of those now being constructed.

But there was plenty of opposition to their use from the slow-going John Bull, and he promptly set to work and throttled the young industry.

He decreed, among other things, that the maximum speed should be four miles an hour, that there should be at least three persons to drive the car, and that a man should precede it with a red flag!

It is hardly necessary to say that these enactments proved immediately fatal. The thousands of automobiles in use were consigned to the scrap heap. And when, in 1896, public interest in the question revived, Great Britain found that, in spite of its early and entirely successful exploits in mechanical traction, it was completely left behind by America and France.

HIS PARTY

A MATRON of the most determined character was encountered by a young woman reporter who was sent out to interview leading citizens as to their politics.

"May I see Mr. Smith?" she asked of a stern-looking woman who opened the door at one house.

"No, you can't," answered the matron decisively.

"But I want to know what party he belongs to," pleaded the reporter.

The woman drew up her tall figure. "Well, take a good look at me," she said. "I'm the party he belongs to!"

A Matter of Induction

By Morgan Robertson

Author of "The Mate of His Soul," "Masters of Men," Etc.

A new kind of air ship story in which an old seaman plays a curious part. "What's seamanship comin' to?" he asks. "They made sogers of us first; an' thin they turned the ships inter foundries, an' shipped blacksmiths; an' now they want to make birds of us"

AEROPLANES and dirigibles had been enlarged and perfected until there seemed little more to learn of them except new forms of manœuvring and the development of aërial tactics—ramming, puncturing with shot and shell, setting fire to them with rockets, and the resistance to their dropping bombs, all of which had been threshed out in theory, and which promised now, in the little unpleasantness between England and Germany, to be reduced to practical utility. Yet, so far, the ultimate victory had been predicated for the huge, swift, metallic dirigible, whose size, speed, cruising radius, and attainable altitude were limited only by cost and the confines of the shed that would house her.

Germany possessed a fleet of such monsters when the friction began, England none at all, relying, as of old, upon her steel walls and twelve-inch guns for surface fighting, and upon cheap and speedy aëroplanes for the little use she had for the air—dispatching of news. As for falling bombs and such bogies, why, she had good marksmen, and there were guns in use, with elevated trunnions, able to send a projectile seven miles upward, at an angle of seventy-five degrees.

So, England, as a whole, was prepared; but England as embodied in one unit of her navy, H. M. S. *Arghyll*, was somewhat at a disadvantage, for the ship had been hurried to sea with her upright guns at the dock yard, and only a small, newly designed aëroplane on her forecastle deck to answer to the modern requirements of war. And on the day that she sailed, old man Finnegan was discovered, drunk and disconsolate, under the skids of the air ship.

"For what's seamanship comin' to?" he queried, when the master at arms pulled him out, and admonished him. "They made sogers of us first, and thin they turned the ships inter foundries, an' shipped blacksmiths, an' now they want to make birds of us."

"You're a bird already, Finnegan," answered the petty officer. "Stay down below when you're loaded, or you'll get a pair of wings with scallops in them."

"And be kind enough," said the aviator, the newly shipped expert in charge of the aëroplane, who had reported the old man, "to keep away from this machine. I am responsible for it."

"I'll guv' it a passage over the side," rejoined Finnegan, retreating before the gentle waving of the master at arms' baton. "What in hell's the bloomin' sarvice comin' to——" The rest was a complaining growl as he fled from the baton.

All hands, from the captain down to the youngest mess boy, had inspected the addition to the *Arghyll's* equipment, and all except Finnegan had voted it as possibly a valuable feature; but Finnegan had derided the "contraption" from the first, until now, when, the interest of the others having abated, he

displayed the keenest regard for it compatible with his recently expressed opinions. He was on deck again five minutes after the flight from the master at arms, and so pestered the aviator with questions about the manipulation of the machine that the latter reported him again, this time to the first lieutenant, Mr. Clarkson.

"And he is drunk, Mr. Fielding?" queried the officer.

"Yes, sir, unpleasantly, aggressively drunk. Not stupid, but troublesome."

"Asking questions?"

"Yes, sir—all about how to run the machine."

"Then answer his questions, if that is all. And, Mr. Fielding"—for the young man's eyes were wide open in astonishment—"you are entitled to know what the whole ship's company knows—the reason why Finnegan, not only alone in this ship, but in the whole service, is allowed to drink whenever he feels like it. You may have noticed, possibly, that not a man on board is ever unkind to the old fellow; and you may have wondered, too, what use he was in any capacity. Yet, he has been useful, not as an efficient, sober man at his station, but as a—what I may call a humble instrument of Providence, in that, on several occasions, he has, while under the influence of liquor, done the thing at the psychological moment that saved this ship and the lives of her crew. Understand? Finnegan, when drunk, has access to powers denied normal men, and the intuitive impulse to use his powers—though, of course, he knows nothing about it, and forgets it all when he comes to himself."

"You mean that he is a clairvoyant, sir?" asked the aviator.

"Hardly that. It is not what he knows when drunk, but what he does. He has repeated the evidence so often that all of us recognize some law behind his feats; and it is the captain's order, backed *sub-officio* by the admiralty, that permits Finnegan to get drunk. If he is drunk now, there is trouble ahead for this ship—it always follows—and if he is interested in your air ship, instruct him; for, you can depend upon it, there is a connection."

"Yes, sir—very well, sir, I will," answered the amazed young man. "I've read of such cases, but never came across one before. I'll do my part, Mr. Clarkson. It is entirely different from what I thought."

So Mr. Fielding, who was a highly intelligent, highly educated young man, developed an interest in Finnegan that surpassed that of the crew as a whole. He warmed to the old fellow, tutored him, and talked with him, explaining the technical details of his craft and her possibilities in war. There is no doubt that the tutelage went into Finnegan's one ear and out the other, yet he responded with half-intelligent comments, that induced his instructor to continue, and soon Mr. Fielding was discoursing on wind pressures, barometric pressures, equilibrium centres, static electric inductions, and like variants of aërial study, by which time all hands were aware of Finnegan's new fad, and the gossip had drifted aft.

Though not a commissioned officer, Mr. Fielding, by virtue of a highly liberal, as well as technical, education, was received on the quarter-deck in the full fellowship that brain and breeding command anywhere, and this gave him access to the councils of authority.

From these councils, he learned that the ship was sent out as a bait for the enemy's ships. She was to draw them out of port, test their strength, and report by wireless. Being old and obsolete, and anything but a Dreadnought, she could easily be spared if sunk, and to that end would skirt the enemy's coast, openly and defiantly.

If the wireless apparatus met with disaster, the admiralty depended upon Mr. Fielding and his air ship to bring home an account of the battle, provided that he, in an aëroplane of sixty-four miles an hour, could outdistance a dirigible of seventy—the minimum speed of the German air fleet.

As Mr. Fielding saw little chance of this, he busied himself, like the others, in forgiving his enemies, and otherwise settling his earthly accounts, consoling

himself with the grim satisfaction that he would be the last man to die. However, he saw to it that his machine was in constant readiness.

It was a monoplane, and, excepting in the power of its engine, but little different from the first machines of the type; yet there was one new feature, successfully tried out before adoption; its two propellers were in front instead of behind; and these, sending their blast on a plane, the pitch of which could be altered, enabled the aëroplane to rise vertically from the ground; then, at the height desired, the pitch could be changed, the blast directed aft, and forward motion attained. But as this was an emergency feature, of value on land, or when the battle ship happened to be steaming before a wind equal to or superior to her speed, the plane was left adjusted to its normal five-degree angle.

But it was battle ships, not dirigible air ships, with which the obsolete old *Arghyll* had to do on the third day out —battle ships and cruisers, two of the first, four of the second. Fortunately, however, the battle ships were apparently as old and out of date as the *Arghyll,* while the cruisers, though undoubtedly faster, were weakly armed and armored.

To the sound of bugle and drum, all hands went to quarters except division and turret officers, who, with the chief engineer, chaplain, and idlers, including Mr. Fielding, mustered on the bridge, with the captain, to await the moment of firing. Also there came at Mr. Clarkson's order, old man Finnegan, bleary-eyed and irresolute of movement, his seamed and sun-tanned face puckered in anxiety, and his gray hair tousled in keeping with his general disorder.

"I want to find out," Mr. Clarkson had explained to his captain and brother officers, "whether his intuitions are at work."

To which the practical and skeptical chief engineer had replied: "Make sure he's full enough, Clarkson. Finnegan is like a turbine—no good without a full head of steam."

"And he is no good at all in your presence, Mr. Metcalf," said the surgeon, Doctor Bryce. "You frighten him. Please remove yourself."

"All right," laughed the man of machinery, moving to the end of the bridge. "When you're through with him I want to ask what ails my engines."

"Finnegan," asked Mr. Clarkson of the shaking wreck now standing before him. "How many drinks this morning?"

"Only three, sir," whimpered the old fellow, saluting the terrible executive officer. "But I'm an old man, sir, and I'm——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the lieutenant, "you are an old nuisance. Why do you drink when the ship is going into action?"

"Because I'm an old man, sir."

There being no refuting this irresistible argument, the officer, to draw him out, asked what he thought of the enemy, pointing to the six ships, now about seven miles away.

"They're going to lick us, sir," answered the old fellow mournfully. "We can lick two, but not six, an' our engines are no good any more, so we can't run, sir."

"Here, here!" called the chief, in the general laughter. "The engines are all right. It's the men that run them."

"That's what I meant, sir," answered Finnegan innocently.

"No insolence, Finnegan," said the executive sharply. "What do you think of that air ship down on deck?"

"What air ship, sir?"

"Down below you, there. See it? You've been bothering Mr. Fielding lately. What do you think of it?"

"I don't know, sir. I can't make it out."

"Know how to start it?"

"No, sir."

"Know what keeps it up? Know what it's for, anyhow?"

"No, sir. Mr. Fielding, here, sir—askin' his pardon—says it flies, but I can't make out how."

"Go down below, Finnegan," said Mr. Clarkson wearily. "Take one more

drink, to steady you, and go to your station."

Finnegan departed. If he took another drink it was so large a drink as to fail of its purpose, for he did not reach the forward turret, where he belonged. Mr. Clarkson, on his way to the turret, a little later, saw the old man nodding on a skylight, within the forward superstructure, and, as he was behind armor, and useless in the turret, he was allowed to remain there.

Then a singing shell went by overhead, and all others got behind armor, Mr. Fielding and the wireless operator, as possible historians of the battle, entering the conning tower with the captain and his aids. And, in the distracting din of the next few hours, while solid shot and armor-piercing shell crashed into the softer parts of the *Arghyll,* the drunken old man was forgotten.

The two German battle ships were now about five miles away, on the *Arghyll's* port bow, steaming along on a course that would keep them at this convenient fighting range; and, beyond them, about a mile farther, were the four cruisers, neither in nor out of the fight. Their heaviest guns could only injure the *Arghyll's* lighter gun positions, while a single shell from the latter's heavy guns would spell destruction to the target.

But the two battle ships, Krupp armed and armored, were a serious factor in the fight. They sparkled and scintillated with red, and their shells soon began dropping close aboard, while the rattle of their batteries sounded like musketry. Then the *Arghyll* belched forth her sounds and messengers, and, except for the occasional crashing of a shell, within or without, all other sounds were drowned.

Her whole fire of thirteen, eight, and six-inch guns was directed against the two ships, and soon there were results. The foremost ship, a high-bowed, four-funneled monster, fully as large as the *Arghyll,* sent the top of her forward turret into the air, followed by an expanding volume of black and yellow smoke.

A thirteen-inch shell through the gun port had done this, and, for a brief moment, all gun crews ceased work to look, hurrah, or shake hands; then, to finish this ship, the concentrated fire of all batteries was directed at the after turret, to put this out of commission, and with it the ship. But it was not done at once.

The second ship, though less formidable in appearance, seemed to possess better guns or gunners; for every sparkle of red from her turrets was followed by an ear-cracking crash, as a shell reached the *Arghyll.* These soon told on her gun crews, and their efficiency was weakened. And from the four cruisers beyond came such a storm of eight and six-inch projectiles as to play havoc with the unarmored bow and stern, and the exposed small batteries.

Guns were dismounted, gun crews killed or disabled, and soon all but the turret guns were silent. Then a crash from overhead notified those in the conning tower that the mast and its fighting top was down.

"There goes the wireless," said the captain. "It looks, Mr. Fielding, as though you are to carry the news, if any one does."

"Yes, sir," answered the aviator, who, with his eye glued to a peephole, was doing well, for one under fire for the first time; "and I see that the machine is still intact. It is all ready; I can start at any moment."

"Not till we've licked this crowd," said the captain grimly.

"Then you are assured that we will win, captain?" ventured the aviator.

"Most certainly—unless they run away. We can't steam with any of them. By the way, as you are doing nothing now, look up Finnegan. He is something of a mascot, you know. Don't let him get out on deck."

Mr. Fielding departed, and found Finnegan where Mr. Clarkson had left him, on the hatch within the citadel. But he was not nodding; he was insensibly drunk, and could not be aroused.

"He's all right, then," said the cap-

tain, when he heard Fielding's report, "and the fact that he is dead drunk proves that we can take care of ourselves. We've settled that first fellow; now for the next. Look!"

Mr. Fielding looked. The big ship in the lead was certainly in trouble. She had swung out of line, was perceptibly heeled and down by the head, and from hatches and gun ports thick smoke floated out and away. And as he looked, the after turret exploded as had the other. Then the fire of all guns was turned on the second battle ship, a smaller craft, but a better fighter.

She fought bravely; but not a shell from her largest guns could penetrate the thick armor of the *Arghyll,* while the latter's turret guns sent their projectiles easily into and through her. In the furious duel that the two ships engaged in for the next ten minutes, point after point was made and noted, as the German ship disintegrated. Gun after gun was dismounted, her two masts went down, the whole forward part soon smoked and flamed; and, finally, four heavy shells, well directed at her water line, gave her a list that promised to put her out of the fight, for it prevented her remaining guns from being trained.

Still she fought, as she could, with ensigns trailing from her shattered smokestacks, until her guns grew silent; then, with a slow, majestic movement, she rolled soggily to port, and settled under, her ensigns flying until the water hid them.

"Now for the cruisers," said the captain. "One at a time."

His orders went through speaking tube and telephone, and every gun pointer on board received the order—to pick to pieces one ship at a time, and they began the task. But they were not permitted to finish; each of the four cruisers turned sharply to starboard, and, with smoke belching from funnels, steamed away from the *Arghyll.* And, as the *Arghyll's* crew cheered and shouted over the news, the first battle ship slid headfirst to the bottom.

Then another order went through the tubes of the ship: "All hands on deck to save life." For there were many small dots floating on the sea above the graves of the battle ships.

The *Arghyll's* crew mustered, bringing ropes, life buoys, cork mattresses, and gratings, and the big victor steamed toward the floating dots; but before half the distance was traversed a shout went up, and men pointed to the southern sky. There was a round spot, which, as it drew nearer, elongated to an ellipse, then to a long, round-end cylinder, with three whirling propellers, and a long car, full of men.

It was a dirigible, an enemy that the *Arghyll* could not destroy—an enemy which, at any height she chose within the inverted cone above gun elevation, could drop bombs down her funnels, or through her deck to the magazines. The *Arghyll* halted, swung away from her, and headed the other way, ready to steam ahead, astern, or to dodge to starboard or port—her only means of defense, unless a gathering storm in the western sky, developed by the firing, would furnish wind of velocity sufficient to disturb the dirigible.

Hovering above, like a huge bird, it slowly approached, in a descending spiral. At half a mile elevation, it ceased its downward motion and forged ahead, in the direction of the *Arghyll.* Then something small and black left, and fell swiftly, striking the water about two lengths to stern and to port. There was a splash, but no explosion; it was a dummy bomb—a feeler, or finder. The dirigible slightly altered her course, and the *Arghyll* gave steam to her engines at full speed ahead.

The next dummy fell but a length away, and the next still nearer. Every man on board had quit the duty of the moment, and if not on deck, was at some port, hatchway, or door, gazing up at the menace in the sky. The big ship wheeled sharply to starboard, but the dropping dummies followed, each striking the sea nearer than the last. At last, one hit the quarter, and men held their breathing, for they knew that the next would be a bomb that would

explode, possibly in the vitals, near the bottom. But it did not come; a whirring sound smote their ears, and those who were in a position saw the aëroplane, with wings warped to an angle of forty-five degrees, rising from the forward deck, and drifting astern as it rose. A yell went up, and a man on the forward turret sang out over the hubbub:

"In the name of God, it's Finnegan!"

"Finnegan!" muttered the captain. "Perhaps—after all. But what can he do? What on earth can he do?"

Mr. Clarkson had joined him as he spoke, and answered him.

"God knows, captain," he said excitedly. "But, depend upon it, sir, he'll do something. It's right in line with the rest, sir. And, notice! Look aloft, captain."

The huge dirigible was gathering way toward the aëroplane, now a hundred yards up, and forging ahead under straightening planes.

It needed no glasses to recognize the old fellow, heaving frantically on the ratchet wheel that controlled the angle, then moving levers and steering gear in the machine that he did not understand. Soon the aëroplane gathered speed, and with the dirigible above pursuing in a descending slant, made for the west, where the lightning played and thundered from the storm clouds. The *Arghyll* wheeled, and followed at full speed.

"Mr. Fielding," asked the captain, "can you throw any light on this? What is your pupil going to do?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, sir," answered the aviator. "It is only a question of time when the dirigible will catch him; and, as they carry machine guns, I see no hope for him."

"Well, his mission on earth for the last ten years has been getting this ship out of trouble. He has drawn away that enemy, and may save himself. We'll wait; it is all we can do."

On went the small quarry and larger pursuer, each growing smaller as they sped, and the distance between them lessening. Five minutes passed, ten minutes, and fifteen; then sparks and puffs of smoke were seen leaving the car of the German air ship. They were firing on Finnegan; but, whether or not he was hit, he gave no sign at the distance, and the aëroplane made no deviation from her straight course westward. It grew smaller and smaller, until, hardly discernible in the gathering dusk of the evening, it faded out of sight in the nearest cloud.

They watched the dirigible, still pursuing implacably, and emitting a continuous display of sparks. Then a brighter spark disturbed the spectacle—a spark that reached from the cloud to the dirigible, and blinded the eyes that looked. A sharp report of thunder came over the water.

"Struck by lightning," exclaimed the executive, when he could look again. "She's gone—I can't see her. Can any one see?"

No one there could so testify, though a dozen glasses searched the gray blue of the western sky. The huge air ship was gone, the flare of her exploding gas quenched in the brighter glare of the lightning bolt that had destroyed her.

"Mr. Fielding," said the first lieutenant, with something of a gasp in his voice, "is this in the line of aviation? Did you teach this trick to Finnegan? Is Finnegan destroyed, too?"

"No, sir," answered the aviator, taking a pair of glasses from his eyes, and looking at the officer, more of wonderment in his face than in the other's. "Finnegan is still alive, sir. The aëroplane has turned, and is coming out of the cloud. As to teaching—I taught him nothing of this, only general laws and principles, which I doubt that he understood."

"But you taught him, or lectured into him, general laws, you say?" queried Doctor Bryce, who had arrived. "That is enough for Finnegan."

"Then there was method in it, after all, doctor," said the executive joyously. "I knew he'd do something. Remember, Mr. Fielding, what I told you the other day?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young man.

"But this feat seems impossible—that is, to be a matter of induction on his part. Why, it never was proven before, though taught in every school of aviation."

"What is taught? What hasn't been proven?"

"Just what we've seen, sir. That a metallic dirigible at a high speed will gather on its surface negative electricity from friction with the positively charged air, and that, unless drawn off gradually, will attract a discharge from a positive cloud. But it is only a theory."

"It's fact," said the doctor vehemently. "Finnegan has made it so."

If so, Finnegan did not know it. He came back, straight and true, steering carefully, and, when a hundred feet away, shouted angrily:

"Where in hell are ye goin'? Git out o' the way."

The aëroplane struck the windlass, and its wings crumpled like paper, while its motor and navigator slid, rolled, and tumbled aft until brought up by the forward turret. Here they picked up Finnegan, unconscious, and carried him to the sick bay, where, when his senses had come back, he was interviewed by the captain and officers.

"No, sir," he persisted. "I know I was full, when I shouldn't orter be full; but I don't know how I got up in the air, sir. I found mesilf on that contraption, and I knew a steering wheel whin I seen it. So I steered."

"And what made you steer into the clouds, Finnegan?" asked the captain.

"The felly behind was a-firin', sir, an' I made for the fog, to hide."

"But you came back?"

A puzzled look came over the old man's face.

"I dunno, sir," he said. "Fust thing I knowed, th' fog was gone, an' I seen the old ship. Ye were runnin' right into me."

"And you don't remember climbing into the aëroplane?" asked Mr. Fielding. "Climbing in, adjusting the planes, and starting the motor?"

"Climbin'," repeated Finnegan, a gleam of recognition lighting his face. "Oh, yis, sir. I was dreamin' like, I think—I thought I was back on Iloilo Island, an' I was climbin' a palm tree to git at some monks that were droppin' cocoanuts on me head."

LOOKING INTO AN ELEPHANT'S MOUTH

WHOEVER has looked inside an elephant's mouth has seen a strange sight. Elephants have no front teeth, and they never eat flesh or any food that requires tearing apart. Eight teeth are all they have, two above and below on each side, huge yellow molars as wide as a man's hand, and a couple of inches thick. Over these hay or fodder is shifted by the queerest, ugliest tongue in the whole animal kingdom, a tongue that is literally hung at both ends, having no power or movement except in the middle, where it shifts back and forth from side to side, arching up against the roof of the big mouth like an immense wrinkled pink serpent.

There is nothing stranger than the working of an elephant's tongue, unless it be the working of his breathing apparatus when he sleeps. Elephants, like human beings, have two sets of teeth—the milk teeth, which are smaller than the permanent molars, fall out when the animals are about fourteen years old. These baby teeth, which are, nevertheless, enormous, are occasionally picked up by circus men among the fodder and preserved as curiosities.

This is the third installment of the best ARSÈNE LUPIN story ever published. It will appear only in the POPULAR. The serial began four weeks ago in the March Month-End Number.

The Hollow Needle

BEING THE FURTHER EXPLOITS OF ARSÈNE LUPIN, ADVENTURER

By Maurice Leblanc

(TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS)

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Burglars break into the château of the Comte de Gesvres. They are overheard by his daughter Susanne, and her cousin, Raymonde de Saint-Véran. The girls rush downstairs to be met by the leader of the band who dazzles them with a flashlight and escapes. Raymonde discovers her uncle unconscious on the floor and near him his secretary, Jean Daval, who has been stabbed to death. She tears a gun from the wall, and, running to the window, shoots the escaping burglar. The wounded man disappears. With the police comes Isidore Beautrelet, a high-school boy already possessing a reputation as a wonderful amateur detective. He discovers that the Comte had killed his secretary in self-defense; that the thieves secured four paintings by Rubens, leaving copies behind; and that their leader was none other than the world famous Arsène Lupin. He also convinces the authorities that Lupin is lying wounded in the château. Some few weeks later both girls are seized and carried away. The only clue is a remarkable cryptogram which is found by the police. The crypt under the chapel is then opened and a body found, the police declaring it to be Lupin's. Shortly after, the body of a young woman, believed by the authorities to be Mademoiselle Saint-Véran, is washed ashore near the château. Beautrelet begins to decipher the cryptogram for the police, but is set upon by one of the criminals, stabbed and robbed of the paper. Coincident with this attack, Ganimard and Holmlock Shears, two famous detectives interested in the case, are kidnapped. Lupin then suddenly appears at the home of his friend and meets Beautrelet by appointment. "Destroy your story of this case you expect to print in to-morrow's papers, and use my version," says Lupin. "No," replies Beautrelet. "We kidnap your father, then," says Lupin. "Very well," responds Beautrelet; "I yield." But upon leaving, his love for the truth overcomes him, and his complete discoveries, to date, appear the following morning. The evening papers of that day contain the news that Beautrelet, senior, has been kidnapped.

V.

YOUNG Beautrelet was stunned by the violence of the blow. As a matter of fact, however, in publishing his article, he had merely obeyed one of those irresistible impulses which make you despise every consideration of prudence; he had not actually believed in the possibility of an abduction. His precautions had been too thorough. The friends at Cherbourg not only had instructions to guard and protect Monsieur Beautrelet, the elder; they were also to watch his comings and goings; never to let him go out alone, and even not to hand him a single letter without first opening it. No, there was no danger. Lupin was bluffing: Lupin, wishing to gain time, was trying to intimidate his adversary.

The blow, therefore, was almost unexpected, and Isidore, because he was powerless to act, felt the pain of the shock during the whole of the remainder of the day. One idea alone supported him—that of leaving Paris, going down there, seeing for himself what had happened, and resuming the offensive.

He sent a telegram to Cherbourg. He reached Saint-Lazare a little before nine. A few minutes after, he was steaming out of the station in the Normandy express.

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It was not until an hour later, when he mechanically unfolded a newspaper which he had bought on the platform, that he became aware of the letter by which Lupin indirectly replied to his article of that morning:

To the Editor of the Grand Journal.

SIR: I cannot pretend but that my modest personality, which would certainly have passed unnoticed in more heroic times, has acquired a certain prominence in the dull and feeble period in which we live. But there is a limit beyond which the morbid curiosity of the crowd cannot go without becoming indecently indiscreet. If the walls that surround our private lives be not respected, what is to safeguard the rights of the citizen?

Will those who differ plead the higher interest of truth? An empty pretext in so far as I am concerned, because the truth is known and I raise no difficulty about making an official confession of the truth in writing. Yes, Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran is alive. Yes, I love her. Yes, I have the misfortune not to be loved by her. Yes, the boy Beautrelet's inquiry is wonderful in its precision and accuracy. Yes, we agree on every point. There is no riddle left. There is no mystery. Well then, what?

Injured to the very depths of my soul, bleeding still from cruel moral wounds, I ask that my more intimate feelings and secret hopes may no longer be delivered to the malevolence of the public. I ask for peace—the peace which I require in order to conquer the affection of Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran and to wipe out, from her memory the thousand little injuries which she has had to suffer at the hands of her uncle and cousin—this has not been told—because of her position as a poor relation. Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran will forget this hateful past. All that she can desire, were it the fairest jewel in the world, were it the most unattainable treasure, I shall lay at her feet. She will be happy. She will love me.

But, if I am to succeed, once more, I require peace. That is why I lay down my arms and hold out the olive branch to my enemies—while warning them, with every magnanimity on my part, that a refusal on theirs might bring down upon them the gravest consequences.

One word more on the subject of Mr. Harlington. This name conceals the identity of an excellent fellow, who is secretary to Cooley, the American millionaire, and instructed by him to lay hands upon every object of ancient art in Europe which it is possible to discover. Ill luck would have it that he came across my friend Etienne de Vaudreix, *alias* Arsène Lupin. He learned, in this way, that a certain Monsieur de Gesvres was willing to part with four pictures by Rubens, on condition that they were replaced by copies and that the bargain to which he was consenting remained unknown. My friend Vaudreix also undertook to persuade Monsieur de Gesvres to sell his chapel. The negotiations were conducted with entire good faith on the side of my friend Vaudreix and with charming ingenuousness on the side of Mr. Harlington until the day when the Rubenses and the carvings from the chapel were in a safe place and Mr. Harlington in prison. There remains, therefore, nothing to be done but to release the unfortunate American, because he was contented to play the modest part of a dupe; to brand the millionaire Cooley, because, for fear of possible unpleasantness, he did not protest against his secretary's arrest; and to congratulate my friend Etienne de Vaudreix, because he revenges the outraged morality of the public by keeping the hundred thousand francs which he received in advance from that singularly unattractive person, Cooley.

Pray pardon the length of this letter and permit me to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,

ARSENE LUPIN.

Isidore weighed the words of this communication as minutely, perhaps, as he had studied the document concerning the Hollow Needle. He went on the principle, the correctness of which was easily proved, that Lupin had never taken the trouble to send one of his amusing letters to the press without absolute necessity, without a motive which events were sure, sooner or later, to show.

What was the motive for this particular letter? For what hidden reason was Lupin confessing his love, and the failure of that love? Was it there that Beautrelet had to seek, or, in the explanations regarding Mr. Harlington, or, further still, between the lines, behind all those words whose apparent meaning had, perhaps, no other object than to suggest some wicked, perfidious, misleading little idea?

For hours the young man, confined to his compartment, remained pensive and anxious. The letter filled him with mistrust, as though it had been written for his benefit, and were destined to lead him personally into error.

For the first time, and because he found himself confronted, not with a direct attack, but with an ambiguous, indefinable method of fighting, he underwent a distinct sensation of fear.

And, when he thought of his good, old easy-going father, kidnapped through his fault, he asked himself, with a pang, whether he was not mad to continue so unequal a contest. Was the result not certain? Had Lupin not won the game in advance?

It was but a short moment of weakness. When he alighted from the train, at six o'clock in the morning, refreshed by a few hours' sleep, he had recovered all his confidence.

On the platform, Froberval, the dockyard clerk, who had given hospitality to Monsieur Beautrelet, the elder, was waiting for him, accompanied by his daughter, Charlotte, a little imp of twelve or thirteen.

"Well?" cried Isidore.

The worthy man beginning to moan and groan, Isidore interrupted him, dragged him to a neighboring tavern, ordered coffee, and began to put plain questions, without permitting him the slightest digression:

"My father has not been carried off, has he? It was impossible."

"Impossible. Still, he has disappeared."

"Since when?"

"We don't know."

"What!"

"No. Yesterday morning at six o'clock, as I didn't see him come down, as usual, I opened his door. He was gone."

"But was he there on the day before, two days ago?"

"Yes. On the day before yesterday he did not leave his room. He was a little tired, and Charlotte took his lunch up to him at twelve, and his dinner at seven in the evening."

"So it was between seven o'clock in the evening, on the day before yesterday, and six o'clock on yesterday morning, that he disappeared?"

"Yes, during the night before last. Only——"

"Only what?"

"Well, it's like this—— You can't leave the arsenal at night."

"Do you mean that he has not left it?"

"That's impossible. My friends and I have searched the whole naval harbor."

"Then he has left it!"

"Impossible; every outlet is guarded."

Beautrelet reflected, and then said:

"What next?"

"Next, I hurried to the commandant's and informed the officer in charge."

"Did he come to your house?"

"Yes; and a gentleman from the public prosecutor's, also. They searched all through the morning; and, when I saw that they were making no progress, and that there was no hope left, I telegraphed to you."

"Was the bed disarranged in his room?"

"No."

"Nor the room disturbed in any way?"

"No. I found his pipe in its usual place, with his tobacco, and the book which he was reading. There was even this little photograph of yourself in the middle of the book, marking the page."

"Let me see it."

Froberval passed him the photograph. Beautrelet gave a start of surprise. He had recognized himself in the snapshot, standing, with his two hands in his pockets, on a lawn, from which rose trees and ruins.

Froberval added:

"It must be the last portrait of yourself which you sent him. Look, on the back, you will see the date, April third, the name of the photographer, R. de Val, and the name of the town, Lion—Lion-sur-Mer, perhaps."

Isidore turned the photograph over and read this little note in his own handwriting:

"R. de Val.—3.4—Lion."

He was silent for a few minutes, and resumed:

"My father hadn't shown you that snapshot yet?"

"No—and that's just what astonished me when I saw it yesterday; for your father used so often to talk to us about you."

There was a fresh pause, greatly prolonged. Froberval muttered:

"I have business at the workshop. We might go indoors——"

He was silent. Isidore had not taken his eyes from the photograph, was examining it from every point of view. At last the boy asked:

"Is there such a thing as an inn called the Lion d'Or at a short league outside the town?"

"Yes, about a league from here."

"On the Route de Valognes, is it?"

"Yes, on the Route de Valognes."

"Well, I have every reason to believe that this inn was the headquarters of Lupin's friends. It was from there that they entered into communication with my father."

"What an idea! Your father spoke to nobody. He saw nobody."

"He saw nobody, but they made use of an intermediary."

"What proof have you?"

"This photograph."

"But it's your photograph!"

"It's my photograph, but it was not sent by me. I was not even aware of its existence. It was taken, without my knowledge, in the ruins of Ambrumésy, doubtless, by the examining magistrate's clerk, who, as you know, was an accomplice of Arsène Lupin's."

"And, then?"

"Then, this photograph became the passport, the talisman, by means of which they obtained my father's confidence."

"But who? Who was able to get into my house?"

"I don't know, but my father fell into the trap. They told him, and, he believed, that I was in the neighborhood; that I was asking to see him, and that I was giving him an appointment at the Golden Lion."

"But all this is nonsense! How can you assert——"

"Very simply. They imitated my writing on the back of the photograph and specified the meeting place—Valognes Road, 3 kilometres 400, Lion Inn. My father came, and they seized him, that's all."

"Very well," muttered Froberval, dumfounded, "very well. I admit it—things happened as you say—but that does not explain how he was able to leave during the night."

"He left in broad daylight, though he waited until dark to go to the meeting place."

"But, confound it, he didn't leave his room the whole of the day before yesterday!"

"There is one way of making sure—run down to the dockyard, Froberval, and look up one of the men who were on guard in the afternoon two days ago. Only, be quick, if you wish to find me here."

"Are you going?"

"Yes, I shall take the next train back."

"What! Why, you don't know—— Your inquiry——"

"My inquiry is finished. I know pretty well all that I wanted to know. I shall have left Cherbourg in an hour."

Froberval rose to go. He looked at Beautrelet with an air of absolute bewilderment, hesitated a moment, and then took his cap.

"Are you coming, Charlotte?" he asked, turning to the child.

"No," interposed Beautrelet. "I shall want a few more particulars. Leave her with me. Besides, I want to talk to her. I knew her when she was quite little."

Froberval went away. Beautrelet and the little girl remained alone in the tavern smoking room. A few minutes passed, a waiter entered, cleared away some cups, and left the room again. The eyes of the young man and the child met, and there was great kindness in the glance which they exchanged. Beautrelet placed his hand on the little girl's hand. She looked at him for two or three seconds distractedly, as though about to choke. Then, suddenly hiding her head between her folded arms, she burst into sobs.

He let her cry, and, after a while, said:

"It was you, wasn't it, who did all the mischief, who acted as a go-between? It was you who took him the photograph? You admit it, don't you? And, when you said that my father was in his room, two days ago, you

knew that it was not true, did you not, because you yourself had helped him to leave it?"

She made no reply. He asked:

"Why did you do it? They offered you money, I suppose—to buy ribbons with—a frock?"

He uncrossed Charlotte's arms and lifted up her head. He saw a poor little face, all streaked with tears—the attractive, disquieting, mobile face of one of those little girls who seem marked out for temptation and weakness.

"Come," said Beautrelet, "it's over. We'll say no more about it. I will not even ask you how it happened. Only you must tell me everything that can be of use to me. Did you catch anything—any remark made by those men? How did they carry him off?"

She replied at once:

"By motor car. I heard them talking about it."

"And what road did they take?"

"Ah, I don't know that!"

"Didn't they say anything before you—something that might help us?"

"No—wait, though; there was one who said, 'We shall have no time to lose—the governor is to telephone to us down there at eight o'clock to-morrow morning.'"

"Where was that?"

"I can't say—— I've forgotten——"

"Try—try and remember—— It was the name of a town, wasn't it?"

"Yes—a name—like Château——"

"Châteaubriand? Château-Thierry?"

"No—no."

"Châteauroux?"

"Yes, that was it—Châteauroux——"

Beautrelet did not wait for her to complete her sentence. Already he was on his feet, and, without giving a thought to Froberval, without even troubling about the child—had he not all there was to be had out of her?—while she stood gazing at him in stupefaction, he opened the door, and ran to the station.

"Châteauroux, madame—a ticket for Châteauroux——"

"Over Mans and Tours?" asked the booking clerk.

"Of course—the shortest way. Shall I be there for lunch?"

"Oh, no!"

"For dinner? Bedtime?"

"Oh, no! For that, you would have to go over Paris. The Paris express leaves at nine o'clock. You're too late."

It was not too late. Beautrelet was just able to catch the train.

"Well," said Beautrelet, rubbing his hands. "I have spent only two hours or so at Cherbourg, but they were well employed."

He did not for a moment think of accusing Charlotte of lying. Weak, unstable, capable of the worst treacheries, those petty natures also obey impulses of sincerity; and Beautrelet had read in her affrighted eyes her shame for the harm which she had done, and her delight at repairing it, in part. He had no doubt, therefore, that Châteauroux was the other town to which Lupin had referred, and where his confederates were to telephone to him.

On his arrival in Paris Beautrelet took every necessary precaution to avoid being followed. He felt that it was a serious moment. He was on the right road that was leading him to his father. One act of imprudence might ruin all.

He went to the flat of one of his schoolfellows, and came out, an hour later, irrecognizable, rigged out as an Englishman of thirty, in a brown check suit, with knickerbockers, woolen stockings, and a cap, and wearing a red wig. He jumped on a bicycle laden with a complete painter's outfit, and rode off to the Gare d'Austerlitz.

He slept that night at Issoudun. The next morning he mounted his machine at break of day. At seven o'clock he walked into the Châteauroux post office and asked to be put on to Paris. As he had to wait, he entered into conversation with the clerk and learned that, two days before, at the same hour, a man dressed for motoring had also asked for Paris.

The proof was established. He waited no longer.

By the afternoon, he had ascertained, from undeniable evidence, that a limou-

sine car, following the Tours road, had passed through the village of Buzancais, and the town of Châteauroux, and had stopped beyond the town, on the verge of the forest. At ten o'clock a hired gig, driven by a man unknown, had stopped beside the car, and then gone off south, through the valley of the Bouzanne. There was then another person seated beside the driver. As for the car, it had turned in the opposite direction, and gone north, toward Issoudun.

Beautrelet easily discovered the owner of the gig, who, however, had no information to supply. He had hired out his horse and trap to a man who had brought them back himself, next day.

Lastly, that same evening, Isidore found out that the motor car had only passed through Issoudun, continuing its road toward Orleans, that is to say, toward Paris.

From all this, it resulted, in the most absolute fashion, that Monsieur Beautrelet was somewhere in the neighborhood. If not, how was it conceivable that people should travel nearly three hundred miles across France in order to telephone from Châteauroux, and, then, to return, at an acute angle, by the Paris road?

This immense circuit had a more definite object—to move Monsieur Beautrelet to the place assigned to him.

"And this place is within reach of my hand," said Isidore to himself, quivering with hope and expectation. "My father is waiting for me to rescue him at ten or fifteen leagues from here. He is close by. He is breathing the same air as I."

He set to work at once. Taking a war office map, he divided it into small squares, which he visited, one after the other, entering the farmhouses, making the peasants talk, calling on the schoolmasters, the mayors, the parish priests, chatting to the women.

It seemed to him that he must attain his end without delay, and his dreams grew until it was no longer his father alone whom he hoped to deliver, but all those whom Lupin was holding captive —Raymonde de Saint-Véran, Ganimard, Holmlock Shears, perhaps, and others, many others; and, in reaching them, he would, at the same time, reach Lupin's stronghold, in his lair, in his impenetrable retreat where he was piling up the treasures of which he had robbed the wide world.

But, after a fortnight's useless searching his keen enthusiasm finally slackened, and he very soon lost confidence. Because success was slow in appearing, from one day to the next, he almost ceased to believe in it; and, though he continued to pursue his plan of investigations, he would have felt a real surprise if his efforts had led to the smallest discovery.

Still more days passed by, monotonous days of discouragement. He read in the newspapers that the Comte de Gesvres and his daughter had left Ambrumésy, and gone to stay near Nice, He also learned that Harlington had been released, that gentleman's innocence having become obvious, in accordance with the indications supplied by Arsène Lupin.

Isidore changed his headquarters, established himself for two days at the Châtre, for two days at Argenton. The result was the same.

Just then he was nearly throwing up the game. Evidently, the gig in which his father had been carried off could only have furnished a stage, which had been followed by another stage, furnished by some other conveyance. And his father was far away.

He was thinking of leaving, when, one Monday morning, he saw on the envelope of a letter which had been sent on to him from Paris, a handwriting that set him trembling with emotion. So great was his excitement that, for some minutes, he dared not open the letter, for fear of a disappointment. His hand shook. Was it possible? Was this not a trap laid for him by his infernal enemy?

Suddenly he tore open the envelope. It was, indeed, a letter from his father, written by his father himself. The handwriting presented all the peculiarities, all the oddities of the hand which he knew so well.

He read:

Will these lines ever reach you, my dear son? I dare not believe it.

During the whole night of my abduction we traveled by motor car; then, in the morning, by carriage. I could see nothing. My eyes were bandaged. The castle in which I am confined should be somewhere in the midlands, to judge by its construction and the vegetation in the park. The room which I occupy is on the second floor—it is a room with two windows, one of which is almost blocked by a screen of climbing glycines. In the afternoon I am allowed to walk about the park, at certain hours, but I am kept under unrelaxing observation.

I am writing this letter, on the mere chance of its reaching you, and fastening it to a stone. Perhaps, some day, I shall be able to throw it over the wall and some peasant will pick it up.

But do not be distressed about me. I am treated with every consideration.

Your old father, who is very fond of you and very sad to think of the trouble he is giving you, BEAUTRELET.

Isidore at once looked at the postmarks. They read:

Cuzion, Indre.

The Indre! The department which he had been stubbornly searching for weeks!

He consulted a little pocket guide which he always carried. Cuzion, in the canton of Eguzon! He had been there, too.

For prudence sake, he discarded his personality as an Englishman, which was becoming too well known in the district, disguised himself as a workman and made for Cuzion. It was an unimportant village. He would easily discover the sender of the letter.

For that matter, chance served him without delay.

"A letter posted on Wednesday last?" exclaimed the mayor, a worthy tradesman, in whom he confided, and who placed himself at his disposal. "Listen, I think I can give you a valuable clue. On Saturday morning, Charel, an old knife grinder, who visits all the fairs in the department, met me at the end of the village, and asked: 'Monsieur le Maire, does a letter without a stamp on it go all the same?' 'Of course,' said I. 'And does it get there?' 'Certainly. Only there's double postage to pay on it, that's all the difference.'"

"And where does he live?"

"He lives over there, all alone—on the slope—the hovel that comes next after the churchyard. Shall I go with you?"

It was a hovel, standing by itself, in the middle of an orchard surrounded by tall trees. As they entered the orchard, three magpies flew away with a great splutter, and they saw that the birds were flying out of the very hole in which the watchdog was fastened. And the dog neither barked nor stirred as they approached.

Beautrelet went up in great surprise. The beast was lying on one side, with stiff paws, dead.

They ran quickly to the cottage. The door stood open. They entered. At the back of a low, damp room, on a wretched straw mattress, flung on the floor itself, lay a man fully dressed.

"Old Charel!" cried the mayor. "Is he dead, too?"

The old man's hands were cold, his face terribly pale, but his heart was still beating, with a faint, slow throb, and he seemed not to be wounded in any way.

They tried to resuscitate him, and, as they could not manage it, Beautrelet went to fetch a doctor. The doctor succeeded no better than they had done. The old man did not seem to be suffering. He looked as if he was just asleep, but in an artificial slumber, as though he had been put to sleep by hypnotism, or with the aid of a narcotic.

In the middle of the night that followed, however, Isidore, who was watching by his side, observed that the breathing became stronger, and that his whole being appeared to be throwing off the invisible bonds that paralyzed it.

At daybreak he woke up, and resumed his normal functions—ate, drank, and moved about. But the whole day long he was unable to reply to the young man's questions, and his brain seemed as though still numbed by an inexplicable torpor.

The next day he asked Beautrelet:

"What are you doing there, eh?"

It was the first time that he had

shown surprise at the presence of a stranger beside him.

Gradually, in this way, he recovered all his faculties. He talked. He made plans. But, when Beautrelet asked him about the events immediately preceding his sleep, he seemed not to understand.

And Beautrelet felt that he really did not understand. He had lost the recollection of all that had happened since the Friday before. It was like a sudden gap in the ordinary flow of his life. He described his morning and afternoon on the Friday, the purchases he had made at the fair, the meals he had taken at the inn. Then—nothing—nothing more. He believed himself to be waking on the morrow of that day.

It was horrible for Beautrelet. The truth lay there, in those eyes which had seen the walls of the park behind which his father was waiting for him, in those hands, which had picked up the letter, in that muddled brain, which had recorded the whereabouts of that scene, in which the play had been enacted. And from those hands, from that brain, he was unable to extract the faintest echo of the truth, so near at hand!

Oh, that impalpable and formidable obstacle against which all his efforts hurled themselves in vain; that obstacle built up of silence and oblivion! How clearly it bore the mark of Arsène Lupin! He, alone—informed, no doubt, that Monsieur Beautrelet had attempted to give a signal—he, alone, could have struck with partial death the one man whose evidence could have injured him.

It was not that Beautrelet felt himself to be discovered, or thought that Lupin, hearing of his stealthy attack, and knowing that a letter had reached him, was defending himself against him personally. But what an amount of foresight and real intelligence it displayed to suppress any possible accusation on the part of that chance wayfarer! Nobody now knew that between the walls of a certain park there was a prisoner asking for help.

Nobody? Yes, Beautrelet. Old Charel was unable to speak. Very well. But, at least, one could find out which fair the old man had visited, and which was the logical road that he had taken to return by. And, along this road, perhaps it would at last be possible to find——

Isidore, who, as it was, had been careful not to visit old Charel's hovel except with the greatest precautions, and in such a way as not to give an alarm, now decided not to go back to it again. He made inquiries, and learned that Friday was market day at Fresselines, a fair-sized town, situated a few leagues off, which could be reached either by the rather winding highroad, or by a series of short cuts.

On Friday he chose the road to go there, and saw nothing that attracted his attention; no high-walled inclosure, no semblance of an old castle.

He lunched at an inn at Fresselines, and was on the point of leaving, when he saw old Charel arrive and cross the square, pushing his little knife-grinding barrow before him. He at once followed him at a good distance.

The old man made two interminable waits, during which he ground dozens of knives. Then, at last, he went away by a quite different road, which ran in the direction of Crozant and the market town of Eguzon.

Beautrelet followed him along this road. But he had not walked five minutes before he received the impression that he was not alone in shadowing the old fellow. A man was walking along between them, stopping at the same time as old Charel, and starting off again when he did, without, for that matter, taking any great precautions against being seen.

"He is being watched," thought Beautrelet. "Perhaps they want to know if he stops in front of the walls——"

His heart beat violently. The event was at hand.

The three of them, one behind the other, climbed up and down the steep slopes of the country, and arrived at Crozant, famed for the colossal ruins of its castle. There, old Charel made a halt of an hour. Next, he went down to the river and over the bridge.

But then a thing happened that took

Beautrelet by surprise. The other man did not cross the river. He watched the old fellow move away, and, when he had lost sight of him, turned down a path that took him right across the fields.

Beautrelet hesitated a few seconds what course to take, and then quickly decided. He set off in pursuit of the man.

"He has made sure," he thought, "that old Charel has gone straight ahead. That is all he wanted to know, and so he is going—where? To the castle?"

He was within touch of the goal. He felt it, by a sort of agonizing gladness that stirred and uplifted his whole being.

The man plunged into a dark wood overhanging the river, and then appeared once more in the full light where the path met the horizon.

When Beautrelet, in his turn, emerged from the wood, he was greatly surprised no longer to see the man. He was seeking him with his eyes, when, suddenly, he gave a stifled cry, and, with a backward spring, made for the line of trees which he had just left. On his right, he had seen a rampart of high walls, flanked, at regular distances, by massive buttresses.

It was there! It was there! Those walls held his father captive! He had found the secret place where Lupin confined his victims!

He dared not quit the shelter which the thick foliage of the wood afforded him. Slowly, almost on all fours, he bore to the right, and in this way, reached the top of a hillock that rose to the level of the neighboring trees. The walls were taller still. Nevertheless, he perceived the roof of the castle which they surrounded, an old Louis XIII. roof, surmounted by very slender bell turrets.

Beautrelet did no more that day. He felt the need to reflect, and to prepare his plan of attack without leaving anything to chance. He held Lupin safe; and it was for him now to select the hour, and the manner, of the combat.

He walked away.

Near the bridge he met two country girls carrying pails of milk. He asked:

"What is the name of the castle over there, behind the trees?"

"That's the Château de l'Aiguille, sir."

He had put his question without attaching any importance to it. The answer took away his breath.

"The Château de l'Aiguille? Oh! But in what department are we? The Indre?"

"Certainly not. The Indre is on the other side of the river—— This side, it's the Creuse."

Isidore saw it all in a flash. The Château de l'Aiguille! The department of the Creuse! *L'Aiguille Creuse!* The Hollow Needle! The very key to the document! Certain, decisive, absolute victory!

Without another word, he turned his back on the two girls, and went his way, tottering like a drunken man.

VI.

Beautrelet's resolve was soon taken—he would act alone. To inform the police was too dangerous. Apart from the fact that he could only offer presumptions, he dreaded the slowness of the police, their inevitable indiscretions, the whole preliminary inquiry, during which Lupin, who was sure to be warned, would have time to effect a retreat in good order.

At eight o'clock the next morning, with his bundle under his arm, he left the inn in which he was staying near Cuzion, made for the nearest thicket, took off his workman's clothes, became once more the young English painter that he had been, and went to call on the notary at Eguzon, the largest place in the immediate neighborhood.

He said that he liked the country, and that he was thinking of taking up his residence there, with his relations, if he could find a suitable house.

The notary mentioned a number of properties. Beautrelet took note of them and let fall that some one had spoken to him of the Château de l'Aiguille, on the bank of the Creuse.

"Oh, yes; but the Château de l'Aiguille, which has belonged to one of my clients for the last five years, is not for sale."

"He lives in it, then?"

"He used to live in it, or, rather, his mother did. But she did not care for it; found the castle rather gloomy. So they left it last year."

"And is no one living there at present?"

"Yes, an Italian, to whom my client let it for the summer season—Baron Anfredi."

"Oh, Baron Anfredi! A man still young, rather grave and solemn-looking?"

"I'm sure I can't say. My client dealt with him direct. There was no regular agreement; just a letter."

"But you know the baron?"

"No, he rarely leaves the castle—— Sometimes, in his motor, at night, so they say. The marketing is done by an old cook, who talks to nobody. They are funny people."

"Do you think your client would consent to sell his castle?"

"I don't think so. It's an historic castle, built in the purest Louis XIII. style. My client was very fond of it; and, unless he has changed his mind——"

"Can you give me his name and address?"

"Louis Valméras, 34 Rue du Mont-Thabor."

Beautrelet took the train for Paris at the nearest station. On the next day but one, after three fruitless calls, he at last found Louis Valméras at home. He was a man of about thirty, with a frank and pleasing face. Beautrelet, seeing no need to beat about the bush, stated who he was, and described his efforts and the object of the step which he was now taking.

"I have good reason to believe," he concluded, "that my father is imprisoned in the Château de l'Aiguille, doubtless in the company of other victims. And I have come to ask you what you know of your tenant, Baron Anfredi."

"Not much. I met Baron Anfredi last winter at Monte Carlo. He had heard, by accident, that I was the owner of the Château de l'Aiguille, and, as he wished to spend the summer in France, he made me an offer for it."

"He is still a young man——"

"Yes, with very expressive eyes, fair hair——"

"And a reddish beard?"

"Yes, ending in two points, which fall over a collar fastened at the back, like a clergyman's. In fact, he looks a little like an English parson."

"It's he," murmured Beautrelet. "It's he, as I have seen him—it's his exact description."

"What! Do you think——"

"I think; I am sure, that your tenant is none other than Arsène Lupin."

The story amused Louis Valméras. He knew all the adventures of Arsène Lupin, and the varying fortunes of his struggle with Beautrelet. He rubbed his hands:

"Ha, the Château de l'Aiguille will become famous! I'm sure I don't mind, for, as a matter of fact, now that my mother no longer lives in it, I have always thought that I would get rid of it at the first opportunity. After this, I shall soon find a purchaser. Only——"

"Only what?"

"I will ask you to act with the most extreme prudence, and not to inform the police until you are quite sure. Can you picture the situation, supposing my tenant were not Arsène Lupin?"

Beautrelet set forth his plan. He would go alone, at night; he would climb the walls; he would sleep in the park——

Louis Valméras stopped him at once:

"You will not climb walls of that height so easily. If you do, you will be received by two huge sheep dogs, which belonged to my mother, and which I left behind at the castle."

"Pooh! A dose of poison——"

"Thank you. But, suppose you escape them. What then? How would you get into the castle? The doors are massive; the windows barred. And, even then, once you were inside, who would guide you? There are eighty rooms."

"Yes, but that room with two windows, on the second story——"

"I know it; we call it the glycine room. But how will you find it? There are three staircases and a labyrinth of passages. I can give you the clue, and explain the way to you, but you would get lost, just the same."

"Come with me," said Beautrelet, laughing.

"I can't. I have promised to go to my mother in the south."

Beautrelet returned to the friend with whom he was staying and began to make his preparations. But, late in the day, as he was getting ready to go, he received a visit from Valméras.

"Do you still want me?"

"Rather!"

"Well, I'm coming with you. Yes, the expedition fascinates me. I think it will be very amusing, and I like being mixed up in this sort of thing. Besides, my help will be of use to you. Look, here's something to start with."

He held up a big key, all covered with rust, and looking very old.

"What does that key open?" asked Beautrelet.

"A little postern hidden between two buttresses, and left unused since—since centuries ago. I did not even think of pointing it out to my tenant. It opens straight on the country, just at the verge of the wood."

Beautrelet interrupted him quickly:

"They know all about that outlet. It was obviously by this way that the man whom I followed entered the park. Come, it's a fine game, and we shall win it. But, by Jupiter, we must play our cards carefully!"

Two days later a half-famished horse dragged a gypsy caravan into Crozant. Its driver obtained leave to stable it at the end of the village, in an old deserted cart shed. In addition to the driver, who was none other than Valméras, there were three young men, who occupied themselves in the manufacture of wickerwork chairs—Beautrelet and two of his Janson friends.

They stayed there for three days, waiting for a propitious, moonless night, and roaming singly round the outskirts of the park. Once Beautrelet saw the postern. Contrived between two buttresses, placed very close together, it was almost merged, behind the veil of brambles that concealed it, in the pattern formed by the stones of the wall.

At last, on the fourth evening, the sky was covered with heavy black clouds, and Valméras decided that they should go reconnoitring, at the risk of having to return again, should circumstances prove unfavorable.

All four crossed the little wood. Then Beautrelet crept through the heather, scratched his hands at the bramble hedge, and, half raising himself, slowly, with restrained movements, put the key into the lock. He turned it gently. Would the door open without an effort? Was there no bolt closing it on the other side? He pushed—the door opened, without a creak or jolt. He was in the park.

"Are you there, Beautrelet?" asked Valméras. "Wait for me. You two chaps, watch the door, and keep our line of retreat open. At the least alarm, a whistle!"

He took Beautrelet's hand, and they plunged into the dense shadow of the thickets. A clearer space was revealed to them when they reached the edge of the central lawn. At the same moment a ray of moonlight pierced the clouds; and they saw the castle, with its pointed turrets arranged around the tapering spire, to which, no doubt, it owed its name. There was no light in the windows; not a sound.

Valméras grasped his companion's arm:

"Keep still!"

"What is it?"

"The dogs, over there—look——"

There was a growl. Valméras gave a low whistle. Two white forms leaped forward, and, in four bounds, came and crouched at their master's feet.

"Gently—lie down—that's it—good dogs—stay there."

And he said to Beautrelet:

"And now let us push on. I feel more comfortable."

"Are you sure of the way?"

"Yes. We are near the terrace."

"And, then?"

"I remember that, on the left, at a place where the river terrace rises to the level of the ground-floor windows, there is a shutter which closes badly, and which can be opened from the outside."

They found, when they came to it, that the shutter yielded to pressure. Valméras removed a pane with a diamond which he carried. He turned the window latch. First one, and then the other, stepped over the balcony. They were now in the castle, at the end of a passage which divided the left wing into two.

"This room," said Valméras, "opens on the end of that passage. On the right is an immense hall, lined with statues, and at the end of the hall, a staircase, which ends near the room occupied by your father."

He took a step forward.

"Are you coming, Beautrelet?"

"Yes, yes."

"But no, you're not coming—— What's the matter with you?"

He seized him by the hand. It was icy cold, and he perceived that the young man was cowering on the floor.

"What's the matter with you?" he repeated.

"Nothing—— It'll pass off——"

"But what is it?"

"I'm afraid——"

"You're afraid!"

"Yes," Beautrelet confessed frankly. "It's my nerves giving way. I generally manage to control them—but, today, the silence—the excitement. And then, since I was stabbed by that clerk—— But it will pass off—— There, it's passing now——"

He succeeded in rising to his feet, and Valméras dragged him out of the room. They groped their way along the passage, so softly that neither could hear a sound made by the other.

A faint glimmer, however, seemed to light the hall for which they were making. Valméras put his head round the corner. It was a nightlight placed at the foot of the stairs, on a little table, which showed through the frail branches of a palm tree.

"Halt!" whispered Valméras.

Near the nightlight a man stood sentry, carrying a gun.

Had he seen them? Perhaps. At least, something must have alarmed him, for he brought the gun to his shoulder.

Beautrelet had fallen on his knees, against a tub containing a plant, and he remained quite still, with his heart thumping against his chest.

Meanwhile, the silence, and the absence of all movement, reassured the man. He lowered his weapon. But his head was still turned in the direction of the tub.

Terrible minutes passed—ten minutes, fifteen. A moonbeam had glided through a window on the staircase. And suddenly Beautrelet became aware that the moonbeam was shifting imperceptibly, and, that, before fifteen, before ten more minutes had elapsed, it would be shining full in his face.

Great drops of perspiration fell from his forehead on his trembling hands. His anguish was such that he was on the point of getting up and running away—— But, remembering that Valméras was there, he sought him with his eyes, and was astounded to see him, or, rather, to imagine him, creeping in the dark, under cover of the statues and plants. He was already at the foot of the stairs, within a few steps of the man.

What was he going to do? To pass, in spite of all? To go upstairs alone and release the prisoner? But could he pass?

Beautrelet no longer saw him and he had an impression that something was about to take place—something that seemed foreboded also by the silence, which hung heavier, more awful than before.

And suddenly a shadow springing upon the man, the nightlight extinguished, the sound of a struggle—— Beautrelet ran up. The two bodies had rolled over on the flagstones. He tried to stoop and see. But he heard a hoarse moan, a sigh; and one of the adver-

saries rose to his feet and seized him by the arm.

"Quick! Come along!"

It was Valméras.

They went up two stories and came out at the entrance to a corridor, covered by a hanging.

"To the right," whispered Valméras. "The fourth room on the left."

They soon found the door of the room. As they expected, the captive was locked in. They took half an hour —half an hour of stifled efforts, of muffled attempts—to force open the lock. It yielded at last.

Beautrelet groped his way to the bed. His father was asleep.

He woke him gently.

"It's I—Isidore—and a friend. Don't be afraid—— Get up—— Not a word."

The father dressed himself, but, as they were leaving the room, he whispered:

"I am not alone in the castle——"

"Ah? Who else? Ganimard? Shears?"

"No—at least, I have not seen them."

"Who then?"

"A young girl."

"Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran, no doubt."

"I don't know—— I saw her several times at a distance, in the park—— And, when I lean out of my window, I can see hers. She has made signals to me."

"Do you know which is her room?"

"Yes, in this passage; the third on the right."

"The blue room," murmured Valméras. "It has folding doors—they won't give us so much trouble."

One of the two leaves very soon gave way. Old Beautrelet undertook to tell the girl.

Ten minutes later he left the room with her, and said to his son:

"You were right—Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran——"

They all four went down the stairs. When they reached the bottom, Valméras stopped and bent over the man. Then, leading them to the terrace room, "He is not dead," he said. "He will live."

"Ah!" said Beautrelet, with a sigh of relief.

"No, fortunately, the blade of my knife bent—the blow is not fatal. Besides, in any case, those rascals deserve no pity."

Outside, they were met by the dogs, which accompanied them to the postern. Here, Beautrelet found his two friends, and the little band left the park. It was three o'clock in the morning.

This first victory could hardly satisfy Beautrelet. As soon as he had comfortably settled his father and Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran, he asked them about the people who lived at the castle, and, particularly, about the habits of Arsène Lupin. He thus learned that Lupin came only every three or four days, arriving at night in his motor car, and leaving again in the morning. At each of his visits, he called separately upon his two prisoners, both of whom agreed in praising his courtesy and his extreme civility. For the moment, he was not at the castle.

Apart from him, they had seen no one except an old woman, who ruled over the kitchen and the house, and two men, who kept watch over them by turns, and never spoke to them—subordinates, obviously, to judge by their manners and appearance.

"Two accomplices, for all that," said Beautrelet, in conclusion, "or, rather, three, with the old woman. It is a bag worth having. And, if we lose no time——"

He jumped on his bicycle, rode to Eguzon, woke up the gendarmerie, set them all going, made them sound the boot and saddle, and returned to Crozant at eight o'clock, accompanied by the sergeant and eight gendarmes. Two of the men were posted beside the gypsy van. Two others took up their positions outside the postern door. The four last, commanded by their chief, and accompanied by Beautrelet and Valméras, marched to the main entrance of the castle.

Too late. The door was wide open. A peasant told them that he had seen a motor car drive out of the castle an hour before.

Indeed, the search led to no result. In all probability, the band had installed themselves there picnic fashion. A few clothes were found, a little linen, some household implements, and that was all.

What astonished Beautrelet and Valméras more, was the disappearance of the wounded man. They could not see the faintest trace of a struggle, not even a drop of blood on the flagstones of the hall.

All said, there was no material evidence to prove the fleeting presence of Lupin at the Château de l'Aiguille; and the authorities would have been entitled to challenge the statements of Beautrelet and his father, of Valméras and Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran, had they not ended by discovering, in a room next to that occupied by the young girl, some half dozen exquisite bouquets with Arsène Lupin's card pinned to them—bouquets scorned by her, faded and forgotten.

One of them, in addition to the card, contained a letter which Raymonde had not seen. That afternoon, when opened by the examining magistrate, it was found to contain page upon page of prayers, entreaties, promises, threats, despair, all the madness of a love that has encountered nothing but contempt and repulsion.

And the letter ended:

I shall come on Tuesday evening, Raymonde. Reflect between now and then. As for me, I will wait no longer. I am resolved on all.

Tuesday evening was the evening of the very day on which Beautrelet had released Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran from her captivity.

You will remember the extraordinary explosion of surprise and enthusiasm that resounded throughout the world at the news of that unexpected issue—Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran free! The pretty girl whom Lupin coveted, to secure whom he had contrived his most Machiavellian schemes, snatched from his claws. Free, also, Beautrelet's father, whom Lupin had chosen as a hostage in his extravagant longing for the armistice demanded by the needs of his passion! They were both free, the two prisoners! And the secret of the Hollow Needle was known, published, flung to the four corners of the world!

The crowd amused itself with a will. Ballads were sold and sung about the defeated adventurer:

"Lupin's Little Love-affairs!"
"Arsène's Sobs!"
"The Lovesick Burglar!"
"The Pickpocket's Lament!"

They were cried on the boulevards and hummed in the studios.

Raymonde, pressed with questions, and pursued by interviewers, replied with the most extreme reserve. But there was no denying the letter, or the bouquets of flowers, or any part of the pitiful story! Then and there, Lupin, scoffed and jeered at, toppled from his pedestal.

And Beautrelet became the popular idol. He had foretold everything, thrown light upon everything. The evidence which Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran gave before the examining magistrate confirmed, down to the smallest detail, the hypothesis imagined by Isidore. Reality seemed to submit, in every point, to what he had decreed beforehand. Lupin had found his master.

Beautrelet insisted that his father, before returning to his mountains in Savoy, should take a few months' rest in the sunshine, and himself escorted him and Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran to the outskirts of Nice, where the Comte de Gesvres and his daughter, Suzanne, were already settled for the winter. Two days later Valméras brought his mother to see his new friends, and they thus composed a little colony, grouped around the Villa de Gesvres, and watched over day and night by half a dozen men engaged by the count.

Early in October Beautrelet, once more the sixth-form pupil, returned to Paris to resume the interrupted course of his studies, and to prepare for his examinations. And life began again, calmer, this time, and free from incident. What could happen, for that matter? Was the war not over?

Lupin, on his side, must have felt this

very clearly; must have felt that there was nothing left for him to do but to resign himself to the accomplished fact; for, one fine day, his two other victims, Ganimard and Holmlock Shears, made their reappearance. Their return to the life of this planet, however, was devoid of any sort of glamour or fascination. An itinerant ragman picked them up on the Quai des Orfèvres, opposite the headquarters of police. Both of them were gagged, bound, and fast asleep.

After a week of complete bewilderment, they succeeded in recovering the control of their thoughts, and told—or, rather, Ganimard told, for Shears wrapped himself up in fierce and stubborn silence—how they had made a voyage of circumnavigation round the coast of Africa on board the yacht *Hirondelle,* a voyage combining amusement with instruction, during which they could look upon themselves as free, save for a few hours which they spent at the bottom of the hold, while the crew went on shore at exotic harbors.

As for their landing on the Quai des Orfèvres, they remembered nothing about it, and had probably been asleep for many days before.

This liberation of the prisoners was the final confession of defeat. By ceasing to fight, Lupin admitted it without reserve.

One incident, moreover, made it still more glaring, which was the engagement of Louis Valméras and Mademoiselle de Saint-Véran. In the intimacy created between them by the new conditions under which they lived, the two young people fell in love with each other. Valméras loved Raymonde's melancholy charm; and she, wounded by life, greedy for protection, yielded before the strength and energy of the man who had contributed so gallantly to her preservation.

The wedding day was awaited with a certain amount of anxiety. Would Lupin not try to resume the offensive? Would he accept with a good grace the irretrievable loss of the woman whom he loved? Twice, or three times, suspicious-looking people were seen prowling round the villa; and Valméras even had to defend himself one evening against a so-called drunkard, who fired a pistol at him and sent a bullet through his hat. But, in the end, the ceremony was performed at the appointed hour and day, and Raymonde de Saint-Véran became Madame Louis Valméras.

It was as though Fate herself had taken sides with Beautrelet and countersigned the news of victory. This was so apparent to the crowd that his admirers now conceived the notion of entertaining him at a banquet to celebrate his triumph and Lupin's overthrow. It was a great idea, and aroused general enthusiasm. Three hundred tickets were sold in less than a fortnight. The banquet was what it could not fail to be, an apotheosis.

But it was a charming and simple apotheosis, because Beautrelet was its hero. His presence was enough to bring things back to their due proportion. He showed himself modest, as usual, a little surprised at the excessive cheering, a little embarrassed by the extravagant panegyrics, in which he was pronounced greater than the most illustrious detectives—a little embarrassed, but also not a little touched.

He said as much in a few words that pleased everybody. He spoke of his delight, of his pride. And, really, reasonable and self-controlled as he was, this was for him a moment of never-to-be-forgotten exultation. He smiled to his friends, to his fellow Jansonians, to Valméras, who had come specially to give him a cheer; to Monsieur de Gesvres, to his father.

Now, when he had finished speaking, and while he still held his glass in his hand, a sound of voices came from the other end of the room, and some one was seen gesticulating and waving a newspaper. Silence was restored, and the importunate person sat down again; but a thrill of curiosity ran round the table, the newspaper was passed from hand to hand, and, each time that one of the guests cast his eyes upon the page at which it was opened, exclamations followed.

"Read it! Read it!" they cried from the opposite side.

The people were leaving their seats at the head table. Monsieur Beautrelet went and took the paper, and handed it to his son.

"Read it out! Read it out!" they cried, louder.

And others said:

"Listen! He's going to read it! Listen!"

Beautrelet stood facing his audience, looked in the evening paper which his father had given him for the article that was causing all this uproar, and suddenly, his eyes encountering a heading underlined in blue pencil, he raised his hand, to call for silence, and began, in a loud voice, to read a letter addressed to the editor by Monsieur Massiban, of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres:

SIR: A chance stroll along the quays made me light upon a little work dated June 1815 and entitled "Some Problems of History," by M. X., an officer in the army under Louis XVI.

The volume possesses no great interest. These historical problems are mostly legends which the author relates without the smallest regard for truth and without wasting time in verifying the impossible. "The Punishment of Brunehaut," "The Jumièges Martyrs," "La Balue's Cage," "Mazarin's Marriage" are different titles of chapters in which the subjects mentioned are only just touched upon.

But there is one title that at once attracted my attention because of the events connected with the two words that compose it: "The Hollow Needle."

Here Beautrelet's voice fell. The Hollow Needle! Was there a question of a Hollow Needle in 1815? Then it was not Lupin——

He continued:

The chapter that perplexed me consists of twenty-four pages, which I have copied out word for word, suppressing only a few tedious passages, a few repetitions and the superfluous conclusion:

"THE HOLLOW NEEDLE.

"Throughout the whole of this period which men have agreed to call the Middle Ages and even going back farther, to the Gallo-Roman period, we find, in legends, in ballads, in passages in our old chroniclers, allusions pointing very clearly to the mystery of the Hollow Needle. Nobody knows what these two words mean, but the words are handed down from generation to generation. A mystery exists—of that there is no doubt.

"In Book III. of Cæsar's 'Commentaries' (MS. edition, Alexandria), we read that, after the defeat of Veridovix by G. Titullius Sabinus, the chief of the Caleti was brought before Cæsar and that, for his ransom, he revealed the secret of the Needle . . .

"Gregory of Tours, in his 'History of the Franks,' relates that Bishop Pretextatus was convicted, at his trial, of having sent to Merowig, the son of Chilperic and the unfortunate husband of Brunehilde, a present of money and a Needle—'which, apparently, could have saved him,' adds Gregory of Tours, without, however, giving any explanation.

"The Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte, between Charles the Simple and Rollo, the chief of the Norse barbarians, gives Rollo's name followed by all his titles, among which we read that of 'Master of the Secret of the Needle.'

"The *Saxon Chronicle* (Gibson's edition, page 134), speaking of William the Conqueror, says that the staff of his banner ended in a steel point, pierced with an eye, like a needle.

"On a charter granted by Henry Plantagenet to his subjects, the Duke of Anjou signs himself, 'Master of the Secret.'

"According to the cartulary of the church of Saint-Ouen, the reason why John Lackland caused his nephew, Arthur of Brittany, to be put to death was that he believed the unfortunate youth to carry a parchment on which this most valuable of secrets was inscribed.

"In a rather ambiguous phrase in her examination, Joan of Arc admits that she has still a great secret to tell the King of France. To which her judges reply, 'Yes, we know of what you speak; and that, Joan, is why you shall die the death.'

"After this period, the allusions which we have been able to collect become more frequent, but even more discreet and, in the chronicles, which increase in number thanks to the invention of printing, these allusions are all made with reference to some king of France.

"Philippe de Comines mentions it in connection with Louis XI. and, later, Sully in connection with Henry IV.: 'By the virtue of the Needle!' the good king sometimes swears.

Between these two, Francis I., in a speech addressed to the notables of the Havre, in 1520, uttered this phrase, which has been handed down in the diary of a Honfleur burgher: 'The kings of France carry secrets that often decide the conduct of affairs and the fate of towns.'

"We now come to the most curious fact in this story. On the 17th of March, 1679, a little book appeared with the title: 'THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLLOW NEEDLE. THE WHOLE TRUTH NOW FIRST

EXHIBITED. ONE HUNDRED COPIES PRINTED BY MYSELF FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE COURT.'

"At nine o'clock on the morning of that day the author, a very young man, well-dressed, whose name has remained unknown, began to leave his book on the principal persons at court. At ten o'clock, when he had fulfilled four of these errands, he was arrested by a captain in the guards, who took him to the king's closet and forthwith set off in search of the four copies distributed.

"When the hundred copies were got together, counted, carefully looked through and verified, the king himself threw them into the fire and burnt them, all but one, which he kept for his own purposes. And the truth would never have been known, or at least a part of the truth, if the captain in the guards had not been present at this holocaust and if, when the king's back was turned, he had not been tempted to withdraw another of the copies from the chimney, before the fire got to it.

"Now, this captain in the guards was the father of my grandfather. In the family papers in my possession, I have found a sheet in his handwriting where he tells the anecdote in minute detail. He explains that it concerns a secret, which was known to the kings of England, which was lost by them when the crown passed from the poor fool, Henry VI., to the Duke of York, which was revealed to Charles VII., King of France, by Joan of Arc and which, becoming a state secret, was handed down from sovereign to sovereign by means of a letter, sealed anew on each occasion, which was found in the deceased monarch's deathbed with this superscription: 'For the King of France.'

"My great-grandfather adds that the young man, the author of the book, was present during the destruction of his works and that King Louis XIV. seemed to know him, but that they did not exchange a word. At the end of the interview, he, my ancestor, was ordered to take him to Monsieur de Saint-Mars, who confined his prisoner first at Pignerol and then in the fortress of the Ile Sainte-Marguerite. This is all that my great-grandfather says about the man, who is obviously no other than the famous Man with the Iron Mask.

"Nor does he say anything more about the book which he snatched from the flames. Did he consider, after reading it through, that the secret of the Hollow Needle was one of those which a faithful servant of the king should not divulge? We know nothing of the causes of his silence. And what became of the book? Neither my father nor my grandfather ever mentioned it to me; and my investigations have thrown no light upon the subject.

"Six months later my ancestor was found dead on the highroad between Gaillon and Mantes. His murderers had stripped him of all his apparel, forgetting, however, in his right boot a jewel which was discovered there afterward, a diamond of the first water and of considerable value. Where did this jewel come from? Who were the murderers? Here again the mystery remains complete.

"For myself, it is probable that I should never have known of these adventures, if a really extraordinary accident had not made me play a part in the sequel which they were destined to have.

"I must first explain that, while I respected the traditions and opinions of my family, I did not elect to follow my father when he emigrated and I took service in the French army. Wounded at Jemappes, I returned to Paris and, in order to live, was obliged to accept various tasks which but half pleased me.

"Now, at the beginning of the year 1793, I was one of the officers charged to keep guard at the Temple, where the royal family were imprisoned. One evening, there were several of us about the king, when it occurred to him to question each of us as to his name and career.

"I gave my name and clearly saw the king give a little start when he heard it, as though it were not unknown to him. Presently he asked:

"'Monsieur, had you not an ancestor who served as a captain under my predecessor, the Great King?'

"'Yes, sire.'

"'Ah!' he said.

"That was all. But, two days after, when he found an opportunity of speaking to me in the absence of my brother officers, he said, very quickly, in a tone unusual to him:

"'Monsieur, if I gave you a commission, could you be relied upon——'

"He hesitated. I completed the sentence:

"'Not to betray your majesty? Oh, sire!'

"He looked at me for a few seconds and stammered:

"'It's—it's for the queen.'

"'Anything that I possibly can do, sire, I will do.'

"'Well, then, it's like this—it's like this. You must yourself hand the queen—— Do you see her sometimes?'

"'Yes, sire.'

"'You must hand her, after my death, this paper——'

"He took from his pocket a little book of which he tore out one of the last pages. But, altering his mind:

"'No, I had better copy it.'

"He seized a large sheet of paper and tore it in such a way as to leave only a small rectangular space, on which he copied five lines of dots, letters and figures from the printed page. Then, after burning the latter, he folded the manuscript sheet in four, sealed it with red wax and gave it to me.

"'Monsieur, you must hand this to the queen and say to her, "From the king,

madame—for your majesty and for your son." If she does not understand——'

"'If she does not understand, sire——'

"'You must add, "It concerns the secret, the secret of the Needle." The queen will understand.' He repeated, in a low voice, 'The queen will understand.'

"Meanwhile, he had been turning over the pages of the book with a thoughtful air and, suddenly, as though he were making a decision of the gravest importance, he flung it among the glowing embers on the hearth and stood there staring at it, while it was gradually consumed and reduced to ashes.

"He ascended the scaffold on the 21st of January.

"It took me two months, in consequence of the removal of the queen to the Conciergerie, before I could fulfill the mission with which I was intrusted. At last, by dint of cunning intrigues, I succeeded in being once more appointed an officer in charge of the royal family and it was thus that, one day, I found myself in the presence of Marie Antoinette.

"We were not alone and I was obliged to dissemble. Turning my back to the jailers, without appearing to speak, I said, so that she could just hear me:

"'Madame, it is from the late king, your husband.'

"She did not allow the least movement of surprise to escape her. She simply raised her head and looked at me.

"'For your majesty,' I continued, 'and your son.'

"And I gave her the sealed letter.

"She satisfied herself that the jailers could not see her, broke the seals, appeared surprised at the sight of those undecipherable lines and then, all at once, seemed to understand. She smiled bitterly and I caught the words:

"'Why so late?'

"She hesitated. Where should she hide this dangerous document? At last, she opened her Book of Hours and slipped the paper into a sort of secret pocket contrived between the leather of the binding and the parchment that covered it. She thanked me with an imperceptible sign; and her glance was so sad and so gentle that I felt repaid for all my trouble.

"'Why so late?' she had asked.

"It is, in fact, probable that this document, if it could, as I presume, have saved her, came too late, for, in the month of October next, Queen Marie Antoinette ascended the scaffold in her turn.

"That is all the part which I took in the mystery of the Hollow Needle. But at least I knew what no one knows to-day, that there is a mystery of the Hollow Needle. And, therefore, when, many years later, I chanced to find my great-grandfather's manuscript notes among my family papers, it was easy for me to reconstruct the story which I have told.

"But also, from that moment, I had but one idea, which was to devote my leisure to penetrating the mystery. I read all the Latin authors, I studied all the chronicles of France and the neighboring countries, I visited the monasteries, I unraveled the account books, the cartularies, the treaties; and, in this way, I succeeded in discovering the references scattered over the ages.

"But no new fact. Yes, one, a very unexpected one, which chance, a precious ally in these circumstances, revealed to me.

"During the Spanish war, I was sent by the Emperor Napoleon on a confidential mission to his brother, King Joseph. My orders were to go fast—I traveled by double stages. But one evening my horse dropped dead not far from Châteauroux. I rang at the door of a castle, where I was received by an old chevalier, an ex-guardsman under Louis XV., and his wife.

"They gave me hospitality. I supped and slept, and in the morning, as I was expressing my thanks, the old man said, with a laugh:

"'If you were not a soldier of the usurper's, sir, I would tell you that it is the King of France whom you ought to thank.'

"'The King of France?'

"'Why, yes, this castle is royal property and I am only—the caretaker.'

"'And what is the name of the castle?'

"'The Château de l'Aiguille.'

"'The Château de l'Aiguille!' I exclaimed, in blank astonishment. 'And the river that flows at the foot of the walls?'

"'Well, that's the Creuse.'

"The Aiguille! The Creuse! Was that the explanation of the famous mystery? But no, no, it was impossible! The castle was scarcely two centuries old, whereas the secret dated back to much earlier times, to the Gallo-Roman period and earlier still. Then what did it mean?

"The old man resumed:

"'Oh, they don't care much about it, our masters! We two have just been left here and forgotten. The property is sure to be sold at our death. Ah, it was different with the Great King—now, he did care for it! To begin with, he built it on the site of a little hunting lodge of no importance——'

"'But bearing the same name, no doubt?'

"'Not at all. The castle was christened by Louis XIV., my grandfather often told me so. It was by his order that they set up those turrets, with the spire representing the Needle in the middle.'

"'In what year, roughly?'

"'There's no "roughly" about it. It was in the year of our Lord 1680, to be accurate.'

"1680! The year after the publication of the book and the imprisonment of the Iron Mask! I understood everything now: Louis XIV., foreseeing that the secret might be noised abroad, had built and named that castle so as to offer the quidnuncs a natural explanation of the ancient mystery. The

Hollow Needle A castle with pointed bell turrets standing on the bank of the Creuse and belonging to the king. People would at once think that they had the key to the riddle and all inquiries would cease.

"Mine, on the contrary, were redoubled. Unfortunately, they have hitherto produced no result; and the problem which I have related in these few pages is, so to speak, unsolvable."

This, sir, is the narrative, curtailed where necessary, contained in the little work published by an anonymous writer in 1815.

One question suggests itself immediately. How did such important revelations pass unperceived? I will first of all observe that the work, which was evidently written during the First Restoration, appeared in the month of June, 1815, just before or just after the battle of Waterloo, in a period, therefore, of great upheavals.

On the other hand, it is very likely that those who read it at the time attached no credit to this jumble of anecdotes, which seems to show more power of imagination than of serious documentation. And this is the impression which I myself would have carried away, if it had not occurred to me to open Cæsar's "Commentaries" at the chapter given. What was my astonishment when I came upon the phrase quoted in the little book before me! And it was the same thing with Gregory of Tours, with the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte, with *The Saxon Chronicle*, with the examination of Joan of Arc, in short, with all that I have been able to verify up to the present.

I thought it my duty, sir, to inform you of these new documents in a case which the public considers won and lost, thanks to the wonderful ingenuity of Monsieur Isidore Beautrelet.

The whole case must be reopened. Without a shadow of a doubt, Monsieur Beautrelet has fallen into the trap which Louis XIV. laid for all those who might be on the track of the Hollow Needle.

Louis XIV.—or, in this instance, Arsène Lupin. For it seems as if the document lost by Lupin or one of his accomplices and recovered from Monsieur Beautrelet by Brédoux, the magistrate's clerk, must be the manuscript sheet sent by Louis XVI. to Queen Marie Antoinette. It has the same appearance, the same shape, the same red seals. And this is the obvious reason why Lupin was not willing to abandon to his adversary's shrewd-sightedness a document which could be turned to account by merely examining the paper, the seals, etc.

Now the concatenation of marvelous circumstances, by which the sheet found its way into the adventurer's hands, remains yet another secret left for us to guess at. But there is one point on which I shall permit myself to draw a very categorical conclusion. If Lupin, under the name of Anfredi, rented from Monsieur Valméras the Château de l'Aiguille on the bank of the Creuse; if, admitting the success of the inevitable investigations of Monsieur Beautrelet, he there lodged his two prisoners; if, I repeat, with the object of obtaining the peace for which he asked, he set the trap into which Monsieur Beautrelet fell, it was because he, Lupin, succeeded in moving freely in the darkness in which we were struggling; it was because he, Lupin, by his unaided lights, without possessing any other facts than those which we possess, managed, by means of the witchcraft of a really extraordinary genius, to decipher the undecipherable document; it was because he, Lupin, the last heir of the Kings of France, knows the royal mystery of the Hollow Needle!

Here ended the letter. But, for some minutes, from the passage that referred to the Château de l'Aiguille onward, it was not Beautrelet's, but another, voice that read it aloud. Realizing his defeat, crushed under the weight of his humiliation, he had dropped the newspaper and sunk into his chair, his face drawn and haggard looking.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Remember that ***two weeks hence*** *you will get the continuation of Arsène's exploits. The fourth installment will appear in the first May issue. It will be on the stands Friday, April 8th.*

Preacher Jim's Debt

By John S. Lopez

Two days and a night in a mountain wilderness, without food and without tobacco, will work wonders in the mind of a city-bred man; but that wasn't all of Preacher Jim's troubles. Every thicket and shadow seemed to bristle with avenging rifle barrels. But he wasn't a quitter—hence this story

PREACHER JIM ALLISON stumbled through the brushwood of the mountain slope and came upon a narrow footpath that straggled upward in serpentine writhings till it dipped from view in a clump of pines farther up the peak. It was the first imprint of civilization he had encountered since the day before, and he shrank back, with mingled feelings of panic and satisfaction. He hadn't thought there could be any doubt about his disinclination for the society of man in that particular locality. The suddenness of the thing had surprised him to realization of his actual indecision.

Two days and a night alone in a mountain wilderness will work wonders in the mind of a city-bred man. And he had had no food, although he did not mind that until his tobacco gave out. Then the berries he tried to swallow had nauseated him, and killed all desire to eat save that it might relieve the deadly weakness that had fastened upon him. Thank God, there had been plenty of water! He couldn't have kept up so long, burning as he was, except for that.

But the cruelest thing of all was to be driven on and on when his brain reeled and his body revolted at the inhuman strain. It had been a living nightmare after the first few hours. What good had it done him to try for a few moments' rest in the blackness of the night before?

His nerves were gone to the point where imaginary dangers were worse than the real. Every sound from the forest creatures had started him on; every thicket and shadow had seemed to bristle with avenging rifle barrels.

He wasn't a quitter—oh, no! If he had been, he'd have used up one of the cartridges that remained in his revolver. It was the strangeness of the barriers he was trying to surmount. Never tell him that big cities aren't the very best place to hide. He knew the difference now; he'd been against the city proposition more than once.

Preacher Jim came to a sudden decision. He pushed his way through the underbrush, with an involuntary groan that prolonged itself to a whimper. God! would you think that tears and scratches from the thickets he had forced through would cause so much suffering?

To be sure, there was that bullet crease in his leg, which bled and stuck to his trousers every time he paused for a moment; but, then, pain was to be expected from a thing like that.

It was his right hand, his pistol hand, that worried him. It ought to pain, and it didn't. The bullet had crushed its way through the thumb and lodged in the palm. Did the numbness mean that he was going to lose it, and it his right hand? That was the fear that had been pounding at his brain all day.

Well, damn it! He'd find some house, and get that fixed, even if they caught him and swung him. Anyhow, he'd rather risk life itself than pass another night like the last; and

already the hint of coming darkness was creeping into the September afternoon. What direction should he take? His wearied body turned instinctively, till he was looking down. But, no! He set his teeth, and faced about. That was too long a chance. He knew what was lurking in the valleys. Every once in a while during the afternoon, the distant baying of hounds had floated up to him through the crisp air. Lucky for him, that storm he had cowered under; it had washed out his trail.

At times the narrow road tilted almost over the mountainside, but Preacher Jim clung to it, with painful, plodding persistence. Far up around the peak he had seen a ribbon of smoke, and that meant mankind and shelter. And now that he had surrendered his independence, he was in a panic lest he should not hold out to reach it.

Why had he not started sooner? It seemed even that nature itself, with its babbling cheerfulness, was mocking him. Those bold squirrels, for instance, that stopped and chattered impudently. His eyes sought missiles to hurl at them, until he remembered his maimed hand. Then he gained the turn and came upon the mountain stream, that purled on its mirthful way.

The very peacefulness of its jingle angered him. But he would stop and mop his face, and get another drink. Would he ever get enough to drink? And he must stop and rest for a moment, there on the rough logs thrown across to make a bridge.

"Howdye, stranger?" called a voice suddenly.

Preacher Jim wheeled toward the sound, and the hand that was useless started toward his pocket. Simultaneously, his eyes fell upon the long-barreled gun, and he shuddered till his haunted glance went farther, and met the frank smile of the freckle-faced boy who held the weapon. There was no menace in that smile. Even in his panic, Preacher Jim knew that. He had measured guile too often not to recognize candor.

The boy came toward him. "Thought at fust ye mought be a rev-'noo agent," he said half bashfully. "Then I seed yo' minister's clothes. Whar' ye bound?"

"I'm lost," lied Preacher Jim. "Was with a hunting party. I'm looking for a house, to rest. And I'm sick and hungry."

"Why, so ye are," said the lad sympathetically, "an' me a-keepin' ye standin' heah! Come right erlong to the house. Mam'll sure be proud to take keer o' ye till mornin'."

He led the way slowly, and Preacher Jim stumbled along over the rough ground, inventing explanations; trying to hide his pain; wondering if it was a trap he was walking into.

The boy had been eying him thoughtfully. "You're scairt at somethin'," he announced suddenly. "An' I think ye wuz lyin' 'bout the huntin' party. Take it straight, mistah, preachah or not, don't try no lyin' on mam. She kin look clear into any one, an' she hates lyin'."

The lad's manner did not invite discussion of the matter, so Preacher Jim said nothing. The warning had even served to cheer him; traps are rarely baited that way. They came through a clump of pines, and there before them lay a forlorn cabin of mud-plastered logs. A tall, angular woman was moving about on the little porch.

"Thar's mam," announced the boy. "Wait heah fer a minute. She'd kill me if I brung a stranger 'thout givin' her time to put on shoes. Mam's awful proud. She was brung up a lady—went to school onct, up Louisville way."

Preacher Jim watched the boy cross the stubble patch and join the woman. They talked a moment, and then hurried into the cabin. Presently, they were out again, beckoning and calling. He dragged himself toward them.

The woman's calico wrapper was clean, he noticed, wondering at his satisfaction in so trivial a detail. So was the straggling gray hair that framed the upper part of her face. He liked her face. The hardness of its

lines gave the impression of self-reliance—not lack of sympathy. Her sharp blue eyes were kindly, and so was her mouth, bent to a questioning smile. With it all was a certain alertness that decided Preacher Jim not to lie more than was necessary. Her eyes swept him for a moment, rested on his maimed hand and his torn clothing.

"You hain't no preacher. It's rev-'noo agents, hain't it?" She stated it as a conclusion that needed no reply.

Preacher Jim nodded dully. "You're right," he said. "I dressed this way to fool them. Been buying moonshine and shipping it North. Somebody squealed, and they came down on me. Been chasing me two days. And I'm shot up a trifle."

"I knowed it," she said, with a chuckle of satisfaction. "Till I seed ye close, I wuz a-skeered ye mought be a criminal. Ye didn't kill any of 'em, did ye?"

Preacher Jim lied in intention. He didn't know whether the man had died or not. He was afraid to tell what he believed.

"No," he said; "I hit one, but not bad."

He was alarmed at the sudden change in her expression, fearful that the partial admission had outlawed him.

"My, my!" she said deprecatingly. "Thet's a fearful thing." Then her face brightened. "But maybe he won't git over it," she concluded.

The boy interpreted the surprise in Preacher Jim's eyes.

"Her dad an' twin brother wuz shot by rev'noo men," he explained, with a sudden air of defiance.

"Thet's so," supplemented his mother. "Pap died instant, an' Ike wuz shot up all over. He hung on till he seed he wuz goin' ter be crippled fer life; then he let hisself die, so's not to burden us down."

The memory of it started the tears down the furrows in her cheeks. She wiped her eyes on her sleeve.

"I'm a God-fearin' woman," she continued, "an' I wouldn't see harm to no man, woman, child, or animal. But a rev'noo agent is different. An' I wouldn't hurt 'em myself 'cause I got religion. But they sure ain't no call ter feel sorry when one gits hurt 'thout fault o' mine."

The strain of suspense was telling on Preacher Jim. Suddenly, his knees went weak. He sank to the edge of the porch, fighting against faintness.

The next thing he realized clearly, he was inside the cabin, lying on a rough settee. The woman was dabbling his face with cold water, and she smiled reassuringly when he stirred. But his eyes went past her and rested on the face of the young girl who held the basin.

Immediately, he fell to wondering who she was. Strange that when the numbed mind gropes for anchorage it feels its way by analyzing immaterial things.

It was no instinct of romance that held Jim's attention. The girl was not pretty—to a man whose ideas are city gauged. The marring hardship of the mountain life had already laid its impress on her. She was angular; she was stooped; her whole attitude bespoke pathetic weariness. Her eyes alone redeemed her face from plainness. Big and brown and soft they were, like the eyes of a timid wild creature—filled to the depths with discontent that was pathetic. The old woman read his thoughts. Her voice lifted him back to self-pity.

"This is Hetty," she said. "Kinfolks of ourn. Her mam an' pap died an' left her ter me. Feelin' better, ain't ye?" She turned to the boy: "Herbey, you help him ter bed, an' fer the Lord's sake be keerful, an' don't hurt him more'n needful. I could do better myself, but it hain't no task fer a lady, seein' there's men folk 'bout."

"Which bed?" said the boy. He looked dubiously at the ladder which led to the loft.

"Course not," snapped his mother. "'Spect a crippled man ter climb thet ladder? Put him in me an' Hetty's bed." She glanced through the door into a lean-to room, in which an ancient four-poster was dimly discernible.

It seemed to Preacher Jim an agonizing eternity before he was finally under the covers and the boy had called his mother.

"Hide them clothes immejiate," she ordered. Then her eyes fell upon the muddy shoes. "Good Lord!" she ejaculated, "I clean fergot the hounds. They'll pick up the scent an' lead the way right heah."

"I know how ter lose 'em," volunteered the boy, with juvenile enthusiasm. "I'll put on his shoes an' mix up his trail down the road. Then I'll wade the crick, an' throw 'em off. No hound can't smell in water."

The mother smiled proudly. She patted the lad on the head.

"Herbey," she said, "you're 'most as cute as Jeff, an' we'll sure git ye some powder an' shot fer yo' birthday. But git erlong, an don't let no rev'noo man git the best o' ye."

"That'll make him keerful," she continued, gazing after him with a fond smile. "Jeff growed up jes' the same. Allus ready fer anything. He'll know what ter do when he comes. He's erway now on business."

The young girl had been standing quietly by the doorway.

"Bizness, ha-ha!" she interrupted, with a shrill, sneering chuckle. She wailed it so suddenly, so fiercely, that Jim and the old woman started. "Bizness! same old bizness that takes him down the gap every day ter the post offis!"

There was no window in the room, but a shaft of light from the outer doorway brought her face in high relief. Jim saw the flush of anger surge to her cheeks. Then she went white and red, in obvious embarrassment.

"Hetty!" said the woman sharply. "Ye fergit yo'self, Hetty." And yet, despite the shrill hardness of her tone, it seemed to Jim that the voice was soothing as well as rebuking—warning rather than angry.

The girl came silently at her command to help fix his injured hand. As they worked, Preacher Jim lay quietly looking at the girl, searching her face, trying to piece together some reason for her outburst. Then, in a flash, he realized why he was so exercised. Subconsciously, he had been wondering whether it involved some secret inimical to his own safety. He started, with uncontrollable nervousness.

"Thar, thar," cautioned the old woman soothingly. "I know I hurt ye cruel, but they ain't no proper dressin's in the house, an' I'm clumsy. When Jeff comes he'll know what ter do; he allus does. Don't he, Hetty?"

Her voice was a challenge to the girl to repair her action. Jim watched her closely; experience had taught him that in danger it pays to gather up scattered ends. The nod and smile she gave was only lip deep. In the depths of her impassive eyes was a momentary glimmer of rebelliousness.

It grew upon Preacher Jim that this Jeff, this prodigy, was at the bottom of the girl's discontent, of her abjectness—that the old woman understood and sympathized with her, but that loyalty to Jeff held her to a middle course.

Jim lay quietly after they had left him alone, trying to juggle some semblance of order out of the chaos in his fevered mind. And now the hand began to hurt him cruelly; but of this he was stoically glad. It meant there was hope of saving it. The mental relief brought by physical pain was doubly soothing. He did not worry so much about the future, and it took his mind from his present uneasiness.

He was awakened gradually by the sound of subdued talking in the outer room. They thought him asleep, and guile prompted him to lie quiet. He might overhear something to his advantage.

Then, suddenly, panic fastened upon Preacher Jim. He had distinguished a new voice—a low-pitched, man's voice. Was it one of his pursuers? Cautiously, he raised in the bed, fearful that the thumping of his heart would betray him. From the darkness where he lay, Jim could see clearly into the outer room, illuminated by a flickering tallow dip and the glow of an open fire.

One quick glance reassured him. The

man who sat at the table with the old woman was the son, Jeff, for whom they had been waiting. Save that his hair was brown and full, he was the replica of the mother, molded to man's calibre. The same blue eyes were there, the same angular features, even the same wrinkles, save that they were etched less deeply.

They sat in earnest conference, he and the mother. Hetty stood by the door, opening it occasionally, to look out into the night. She was holding herself aloof—pointedly so. Occasionally, the woman included her in the conversation; but she only answered with a nod of the head or in sullen monosyllable. The young man never addressed her, though from time to time he glanced at her, with a curious expression in his eyes.

The news which Jeff had brought up from the valley was alarming. The man Preacher Jim had shot was dying, and there was a reward of two hundred dollars for Preacher Jim's taking, dead or alive. That was why the mountain folk were assembling, to search the whole mountain. Cold sweat started from Jim's brow.

God! Could he expect that these people would throw aside that amount for a mere stranger? He measured probabilities from his own practical standpoint. Poverty flaunted its talons over the cabin; and to these people the reward meant almost a fortune. He had walked into a trap. There was no hope for him, in his crippled condition.

"Why is it," said the old woman suddenly—fiercely, it seemed to Jim—"thet mountain folks is helpin' hound a man because he shot a rev'noo man?"

"Thet ain't their story," replied the man. "They allow this feller"—he jerked his thumb toward the inner room—"is a Yankee swindler, what's been cheatin' an' spyin' on folks along the ridge."

"Hit's a lie," snapped the woman. "Them sneakin' agents has told thet story ter git help. This feller *is* a Yankee, but he ain't all bad. An' he didn't lie—not so's to speak—do ye understand? An' do ye s'pose thet on the say-so o' them thet's my enemies, I'm goin' ter burden my soul by givin' up a man what trusts me? We'll pertect this man, Jeff, son, till we find out the truth. Hit's no more'n honorable."

A sudden exclamation from the girl interrupted them.

"Thar goes Herbey's flare," she drawled, with studied calmness.

For the first time, Preacher Jim learned that the mother had sent the boy down the mountain with a torch, to signal the starting of the posse. It was comforting knowledge.

"I'll do as ye say," said Jeff doggedly. "Whar's the money?"

The old woman reached to the shelf for a battered sugar bowl. Jim watched with burning eyes while she poured a pitiful hoard of silver change into Jeff's hand.

"Ef it hain't enuff fer bandages an' stuff, ast fer trust," she said hurriedly. "An' ef ye meet the posse, jes' yo' say yo' ridin' down fer medicin' fer Hetty. She's been hurt. Don't fergit, or they'll suspect ye, an' search the cabin."

Jim heard the door slam and then the dull clatter of unshod hoofs. They had kept the horse ready. He sank back in the bed just in time to pretend sleep before the old woman was gently shaking him by the shoulder.

"They're comin'," she said, "an' we got ter hide ye under the bed, so's Hetty kin git in an' play sick. Hit's the only way. No one in these yere mountains 'd dare insult a lady by searchin' her room."

In his elation, Jim scarcely felt the hurt of the transfer to the stuffy, cramped space. Presently, he heard the woman chiding the girl: "Hit's simply got ter be did, Hetty. I know how ye feel, girl, but don't argy. Thar's bound ter be agents with fox eyes, that'll see ef everything ain't jes' so."

For the next hour or so, Jim cowered under the bed, in abject terror, his nerves strained to collapse. He heard the arrival of the posse, the stamping of the horses, the baying of the hounds, the clamor of the mountaineers—listened, and bit his nails un-

til they bled, to keep from shrieking aloud. Swift-moving impressions they were, chaotic beyond lucid understanding, and yet seared on his tortured brain with indelible impress.

Not until they had been gone for hours, it seemed, did he gain hold of himself to the point of actual comprehension. Jeff was binding his hurts, and the old mother stood by, with soothing words, when he winced. Hetty sat by the door, listening intently for danger sounds from the outside. Even the boy was there, perched on the farther side of the bed. He held the things Jeff might need, boasting meanwhile of how he had fooled the "rev'noo" men, and what he would do if they came again.

Preacher Jim's eyes filled. He couldn't help it, and he wasn't ashamed. In fact, he was glad of it. It brought a feeling of not having to watch everybody in the world. And, best of all, he hadn't bought it with money.

"You're all too good to me," he spluttered suddenly.

"Thar, thar," cooed the old woman, laying her hand on his head.

He placed his face against her arm, and swallowed nervously.

"My own mother couldn't have done more for me," he sobbed. "An' I'll pay you back, all of you; I sure will, I sure will!"

During the weeks that followed, Preacher Jim had plenty of time to sift and balance and adjust to proper proportion the new views on humanity that were creeping into his mind. The wound in his leg had not healed as quickly as he expected, and this kept him tied to the bed.

At first, he was impatient because they would not bring him the doctor from the lower gap; he had a little money, enough to pay the trifling fees. But Jeff would not listen, though he was patient enough; the old doctor was dead, he explained, and the one who took his place was a stranger—might even be a government spy.

It was only one instance of the way they safeguarded him. And, gradually, Jim realized the spirit that was back of it all, and melted to a sentimental state of mind.

It touched him deeply that they trusted him so utterly, although he was so absolute a stranger. They had never asked him about himself—only his name. Mountain etiquette forbade it. Yet they openly discussed moonshine stills, and "blind tigers," and blockade running. He commented on this once to the old woman, but she only laughed at him.

"They hain't nothin' that'll turn on them thet treats 'em right, not even wild animals," she declared.

A ridiculous premise, from a worldly standpoint, of course; but it summarized their sublime faith in humanity and honor and certain other things that do not count as assets in our superior civilization. It is worth making clear, because later it enabled Jim to comprehend the whyfor of a certain thing that still continued to puzzle him. This was the obsession of restraint that sat upon Hetty and Jeff, and even the mother.

Now that he was free of pain and worry, and had only to kill time, Jim spent hours trying to solve the riddle. And this was not altogether from curiosity. Whatever the strain, it was making them unhappy, and, strangely, it so affected Jim.

The restraint was the more obvious when the three were together, because then Jeff's mother pretended not to notice what was so very apparent. Often when Jeff was talking, the girl stole glances at him; but she always turned away her eyes when he moved his head.

Meanwhile, Jim was getting well rapidly, and they were planning how to get him safely out of the mountains. He was left alone more often now, for the last of the pitiful crops were ready to get in, and the little family worked from early to late.

Only Jeff took time off from the farm. Every afternoon, regular as clockwork, he rode down the trail to the post office, although there was never a letter in all the while. Watching

closely, Jim noticed that during these trips Hetty always became more apathetic, self-engrossed—that her eyes took on an added burden that only lifted when he returned empty-handed.

All the time she could spare, the old woman spent with Preacher Jim, chatting and joking, and even exhibiting a marked interest in his spiritual affairs. She quoted Scripture as she got it from the "circuit preacher" four times a year, and he liked to listen to her picturesque interpretation, far-fetched and appalling as much of it was.

By and by, he told her some of the truth of his warring with mankind. She was shocked, as he had expected, and she worried and fretted as if it were her own son, with the awful hereafter staring him in the face.

"I'll do better when I get home to New York," he promised.

"New York!" she gasped—it was the first time he had told where he came from—"New York! Don't go back. No wonder ye ain't been God-fearin'. My Jeff ain't been the same since he went up thar!"

Then she hurried away, ashamed of the emotion she could not conceal. More light came to Jim the same afternoon, when Herbey stayed with him. Preacher Jim and the lad had become fast friends, and, strangely enough, literature had been the potent means. The boy was knowledge hungry, insatiable for stories of the outside world, and hour after hour Jim had told him the wonderful things he had read.

And this day it was Shakespeare. Preacher Jim knew the poet by heart. Not as you do, perhaps, if you have the sense of poetic rhythm; but the stories themselves he remembered. He had just finished telling Herbey of the tragic loves of *Romeo* and *Juliet*.

"I know," said the lad excitedly. "Somethin' like Jeff an' Hetty, only different. They was a-goin' ter be married when Jeff come back from the No'th. But he met another gal that he liked. I heard him tell Hetty an' mam, fair an' square. They ain't nothin' sneaky 'bout Jeff."

It may seem unreasonable of Jim that this explanation did not satisfy him. Perhaps it was that he wanted to occupy his mind, as some convalescents utilize dissected picture puzzles. At any rate, he began to study Jeff from various new angles, arriving at conclusions that solved nothing, and only served to spur his curiosity.

Since the first night, Herbey and Jeff had shared the lean-to room with him. And among their scant belongings, which they brought from the loft, was a small cedar box, that Jeff had placed carefully on a shelf near the door. Now that Jim was hobbling around on a forked sapling that the lad had cut for a crutch, he learned every nook and cranny of the cabin, and everything it contained. He wanted to know what to send them when he made a lucky strike. Thus came about a significant discovery. In all the cabin, that cedar box of Jeff's was the only thing locked from prying eyes!

Scarcely had Jeff ridden off the following afternoon than Preacher Jim carried the box into the outer room. He had picked many a lock in his career, but now his heart was sick with excitement born of shame. He was not even sure that his motive excused him. But he had reasoned it all out in the night, and he would not turn back. There was no physical difficulty to the job. He had prepared a piece of wire, and the lock was cheap and old. Even as he wavered, the tumblers clicked, and the lid came open in his hand.

One quick glance disclosed a bundle of letters and theatre programmes and some trinkets. Then there stole to Jim's nostrils a heavy, penetrating perfume, that was somehow associated in his mind with stage doors and suppers after the theatre; with thoughts of gay companions, of glitter and mirth.

Preacher Jim examined the programmes. They were all of the same musical comedy, but the dates and towns were different, extending in consecutive order over a period of several weeks. The postmarks on the notes covered the same period. It was evident that Jeff had followed the show.

Quickly, but carefully, Jim scanned the letters. There was little need for him to dwell on their contents. He knew what passed current as wit in the chorus world—knew the stereotyped phrases and terms that masquerade as spontaneous expressions of emotion and devotion.

The notes were milestones in their intimacy from its beginning to its end. At first, they had been careless, chatty little scrawls, filled with allusions to people they knew, to places they had been, and things they were going to do. Then the letters grew more frequent and more fervid, and in one of them she declared that she loved Jeff because he was different from any other men she had ever met—that she was tired of the glittering life, and would be his wife—that she would sacrifice everything for him.

Gradually, the letters were farther apart and cooler, and full of excuses. And then the final letter, bidding him go back and make the mountain home ready, and wait and work for her—and promising to write to him constantly.

There had been no letters to the mountains. She had never intended to write. It was the old story. She had taken the easiest way to spare a scene with a lover who was so ingenuous as to believe that she could bury herself in a mountain wilderness, a thousand miles from Broadway.

Preacher Jim gave himself up to meditation—silent, save when he uttered an occasional heartfelt oath. He could see no way out. Jeff, himself, with his quixotic ideas of honor and fidelity, stood in the way. He dare not tell the youth that he had been exploited for a woman's fickle whim; that he was betrayed—worse than betrayed, because he did not realize it. Such faith as Jeff's is not so easily shaken—he would assail Preacher Jim as a liar, as a vilifier of womankind.

Jeff came back late in the afternoon, leading a borrowed horse. He was going to smuggle Preacher Jim out of the mountains that night, and they were to ride twenty miles to a wayside station, where he could catch a train before sunup. They stopped on the porch, to talk it over, while the women cooked supper. Preacher Jim listened, with preoccupied mind. He was thinking of the letters, and outlining a desperate plan that had taken shape in his brain.

Suddenly, Jeff turned to him.

"I s'pose you know New York like I know the Gap? I was there once. Was took up 'bout some land of ourn that has coal on it."

The tenseness of his voice brought Preacher Jim to earth with a start. He admitted that he knew the metropolis. Everything Jeff had seen he could describe intimately. The mental trip they took over the city, comparing notes by the way, was clearly subterfuge. In the minds of both was the same destination.

Jim led the way adroitly, and the youth followed, with scarce concealed desire. And, lo! in a moment they were on the Great White Way and in its theatres and cafés. Preacher Jim knew the playhouses and the plays—knew the men and women of the stage and the manner of their lives.

"They ain't what some folks think—the men and women," said Jeff, interrupting him. "The girls is mighty sweet, some of 'em, don't you think! It's the excitement that holds 'em to the work. Lots of 'em wants to give it up."

The wistful ring in his voice transformed the declaration to a question. He wanted to be reassured.

"Right you are," said Jim. He swallowed nervously. "I've known cases that prove what you say. One of them, about a year ago, was a sad case, but interesting. I'll tell you about it."

He lit his pipe, with a great show of carelessness, though his hand trembled. Then he continued, between meditative puffs:

"She was a chorus girl—one of the kind you mention—tired of the stage. And then she met a fellow that was visiting town. They fell in love, but they couldn't marry right away. His money was gone. So he went back

home to make a place for her. She wasn't strong, and the work was too hard for her. She got pneumonia, and died in Bellevue Hospital."

Preacher Jim sketched in the details cunningly. His head was bent and his eyes were fastened on the ground.

"And she died happy," continued Jim, "except that she worried about what he'd think at not hearing from her. An intimate friend of hers told me all about it. She'd promised to send him word—and then lost the address. And she was awful worried about it, was Madge—her name was Madge Warner."

"Madge Warner!" blazed Jeff, with indrawn breath.

"Yes," said Jim. "The girl that died was named King—Trixie King. Why, what's the matter?"

Jeff took his hands from his eyes and moistened his lips.

"Matter?" he said dully. "Nothin', only I knowed Madge an' Trixie. I was the feller!"

Preacher Jim did not disturb him for several moments. Then he laid his hand caressingly on the arm that was bent about the lad's forehead.

"I'm sorry, awful sorry," mumbled Jim. "I didn't know you were the one that loved her."

The youth raised his head.

"It ain't that," he said, with quivering lips. "I found I didn't really love her after I got back home and seen Hetty again. But I been doubtin' a gal that was true. I never heard from her, an' I thought she'd forgot. An' that made it hard fer me to be honest. But I'd give my word, so I couldn't do nothin' but wait. I'm awful cruel, I s'pose; but I ain't a-goin' to lie. Sence it's happened, I'm glad to know, 'cause I might of done somethin' mean seein' I was gettin' mistrustful."

He turned, and placed his hand on Jim's shoulder. "Thank ye fer bringin' the news," he said.

Preacher Jim made no reply. Over Jeff's shoulder, he had discovered the mother standing in the doorway. She had heard. There was a peculiar expression in her eyes and in the set of her lips. Her face had been contorting strangely.

They were ready to start. The partings had been said. Herbey had gone ahead to see that the way was clear through the gap. Hetty stood in the doorway, watching them wistfully. Jeff helped Jim to the saddle, and then turned to his mother.

"Mam," said he softly, "I'd like it ter be all right 'tween me an' Hetty when I git back. Will ye kinder start talkin' to her?"

"Do it yerself," she replied. "An' there ain't no better time than now!"

She watched him follow the retreating girl through the doorway. Then she turned, with a happy chuckle, to Jim.

"Jim," said she softly, "it was a wonderful story 'bout thet gal. Ye more'n paid yo' debt. I ain't never goin' ter forgit ye in my prayers. I wisht ye was my son!"

Before he could reply, Jeff was back, with springy stride.

"Better git along," he said brightly, mounting his horse. "Time's up!"

"All right," said Jim. "I just want to kiss the mother good-by." He bent down, and placed his arm about her neck.

"I can't leave you with a lie," he said miserably. "I know how you hate liars, and I'm ashamed of myself." He looked around cautiously. Jeff was riding off.

"I'm a miserable skunk," he continued; "but I did it for the best. Listen! I never knew the girl, or even heard of her or her friend, till I read Jeff's letters. But I know her kind—she's dead for him. I was lying, lying, lying! And now you'll always think ill of me."

"Jim," said she solemnly, "lyin' is a terrible unholy thing. But I forgive ye. Know why? 'Cause ye done it so fine. Why, land sakes, s'pose I didn't know ye was lyin' all the time? Hain't I sed I kin allus tell? An', anyway, I come back quiet, an' seen ye studyin' the letters jest afore Jeff got home. Thet's why I stood in the door, makin'

faces at ye. I was skeered sick ye might break down."

"You knew?" he gasped.

"Yes; an' it's teached me thet lies thet saves troubles ain't as bad, maybe, as truth thet makes troubles. Why, Jim, God bless ye, I'm more grateful than ef it was all gospel. Ef it was a sin, ye done it fer us. Ye went through an awful strain—ye showed it plain, which I'm glad fer, an' which I thank ye fer ag'in. I'm s'prised, though, thet Jeff didn't notice."

Jim straightened in the saddle, and loosed the reins.

"I'm out of practice," he said, with tremulous jocularity. "And it's your fault, mother. All right, Jeff—coming! Good-by, Hetty! Good-by, mother! Get up, nag!"

ROMANCE IN TOWN NAMES

TO any one who frequently consults the United States official postal guide, which is a dictionary of post offices, the number of peculiar and mirth-provoking names used to designate places where mail is handled is an unending source of astonishment.

Many of these names are plainly suggestive of their origin. "Sweetlips," Tennessee, for instance, at once reveals to a romantic mind the story of love, and there is little doubt that in some way or other Cupid's arrows are responsible for the name. "Mud," Texas; "Mule," Oregon; "Sodom," New Mexico; "Yellowjacket," Idaho, and "Loyalsock," Pennsylvania, are also suggestive, but the desirability of their selection is a matter of serious doubt. "Panther" is enough to depopulate most any town, but six States have used it to designate post offices. Iowa has made a post office of "Wax," Florida of "Sawdust," Kentucky of "Seven Guns," Texas of "Twin Sisters," Tennessee of "Virtue," North Carolina of "Wit," Mississippi of "Zero," Colorado of "Love," Pennsylvania of "Mountain Sunset," South Carolina of "Oats," Virginia of "Pluck," Missouri of "Pure Air," and Maryland of "Sassafras." Mail is left at "Option" in Pennsylvania. The only "Pious" post office is in Ohio. If "Quality" is what you want, go to Butler County, Kentucky, for it. "Rolling Stone" is in Minnesota. The question arises, will it stay there? The optimistic note is struck in "Hope Well," New Jersey. "Rockycomfort" is the contradictory name of a Missouri vilage. If Uncle Sam's employees catch the spirit of the place, mail is handled with more than ordinary promptness at "Rushmore," Minnesota. "Peppertown," Indiana, is supposed to be a hot place. Says Florida to Alabama: "Yours is not the only 'Pebble' on the beach."

A POSER FOR THE CANDIDATE

IT was a local political meeting, and the candidate, at the conclusion of his speech, invited the audience to ask questions and he would answer them to the best of his ability.

Several questions were put and duly answered satisfactorily, when a serious-looking man, who had been busy taking notes all the evening, rose and asked permission to put a question—which permission was granted.

In the midst of profound silence the serious one startled the whole assembly by saying:

"The question I should like to ask is, 'Is there going to be any fireworks after this here meeting.'"

Einstein, Fine Gentleman

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "From the Ranks," "The Winner Picker," Etc.

"Them Einsteins is nice folks, even if they ain't rich," says Mrs. Sweeny. "They'd of went down and out if it wouldn't of been for Danny. But Danny hands Mr. Einstein a hundred that set him on his feet again, and it wasn't long b'fore he was pressin' all the pants in the neighborhood, happy as ever"

OW, there's that Wall Street thing," began Mrs. Sweeny.

"What of it?" asked the Boarder.

"Well," she replied, "when my poor, dead Danny was alive, and makin' book at the track, he usta keep wonderin', all the time, why the cops didn't raid the Stock Exchange, 'stead of the poolrooms. Somethin' has been happenin' lately that's put me in mind of the time he went down there, and says baa-baa onct or twict, and got his hair cut, or whatever they calls it when a gent gets trimmed."

"Shearing the lambs," suggested the Boarder.

"Yes, I guess that's it," she agreed, "and as for me, I think the place ought to be pinched. Now, everybody knows that a poolroom is a gamblin' place, but we're told that the Stock Exchange ain't. We're warned against one, but the other is a gent in open-face clothes, with a slungshot in his pocket."

"You haven't been dabbling in stocks?" queried the Boarder.

"No, I ain't," was the reply, "but I'm thinkin' I'd like to. Every lady gets the stock bug when she's broke, mister. She don't have no idee what it's all about, but she knows that playin' the market stands for money, and so Wall Street comes into her mind right after the idee of pawnin' her di'mon' rings. But it wasn't quite that way with me to-day, though I was wishin' for money, all right. I've sure got to have some money to go on a vacation with, for I just can't stand this city heat any longer. Why, it's so hot that the little children is sailin' boats in the asphalt."

"But I thought you had nearly two hundred dollars saved for a trip to the mountains," said the Boarder.

Mrs. Sweeny put a small, shapely hand to the back of her head, and thoughtfully explored for straying locks. She eyed the Boarder as a teacher regards a child who is unable to learn a very simple lesson.

"I thought you knew that I was made on purpose for folks to take money away from," she said, at length. "I can't keep nothin' but my troubles. Whenever I get a dollar and a half, it fades away, like the dye in a twelve-ninety-eight suit bargain. The only reason I got car fare right now is that nobody has called in to-day yet."

"I suppose you spent the two hundred on clothes," hazarded the Boarder.

"Yep," she replied, with a cold stare, "I had to have some little thing for my walks in the park." Then, seriously: "I've got a two-dollar pair of gloves to show for that two hundred, mister. Moe Einstein and his wife sent 'em to me on my last birthday. He's the little tailor feller 'round the corner; and if it wasn't that my poor dead Danny almost busted him once, I don't know as I'd of done it."

She passed her dusting cloth jerkily around the frame of a picture, then

went to the open window, and shook it.

The Boarder stacked his written sheets before him in a neat pile, and lolled back in his chair. Moe Einstein was a new luminary in the Sweeny firmament, who might shine interestingly.

"I never heard of this Mr. Einstein," he remarked.

"He makes ladies' and gents' clothes," she explained, "and beats his wife."

"I see," said the Boarder.

"He don't mean nothin' by his roughhouse work, though," she hastened to add. "It's just a habit. But, all the same, mister, when you come to think about it, some of these New York habits is some fierce, ain't they? My Danny never done that—but I don't know if I'd thought any the less of him if he had. My gee, but I sure did like that man! Honust, mister, I thought so much of him that I cut the fringe off my best bedspread, so it wouldn't tickle his chin. Yes, I did!

"I ain't sayin' that Mister Einstein thinks anywhere as much of his wife as my Danny thought of me, but when a man will stay away from the corner saloon two nights out of a week, just for a woman, it shows there's somethin' to him, don't it? It sure does. And that's Mister Einstein for you. Barrin' his little failin' of biffin' a body in the neck, he's a real gent; and me and Danny usta like him.

"Danny give him many and many a talk on etiquette, pointin' out how unmannerly it was to be alwus soakin' his wife in the jaw, and it done some good for spells; but poor Mrs. Einstein was certain to show up, sooner or later, with a black eye or somethin', and Danny would have his talkin' to do all over again. But, for all that, they was real fr'en'ly, them two, and one time Danny comes home, and says:

"'I give that there tailor man a hot tip on Bright Eyes this afternoon,' he says, 'and he pulls down a hundred and fifty on her,' he says. 'Gee,' he says, 'the little feller's prouder than a lawyer that's just stung somebody.'

"Well, mister, that was the beginnin' of it; Einstein got as nutty as a peanut stand about them ponies. He had to press four pairs of pants to get a dollar for the hand-book man; and as he blowed as much as ten dollars some days, you can see that he had to branch out of the neighborhood to get enough pants to press. And, my gee, the gas he used up in his irons! Honust, mister, he was a awful race bug. He told Danny about dreamin' of lobsters, and then almost goin' crazy tryin' to decide whether the hunch meant to play The Skipper or Sea Gull. And, when Coney Girl won, Mister Einstein tore out two handfuls of hair because he hadn't connected her with the dream. You can see, mister, what a dreadful feller he was for them gallopers."

"He went to extremes," commented the Boarder.

"He didn't do no such thing," Mrs. Sweeny corrected. "He run it in the ground."

"I accept your amendment," said the Boarder soberly.

"Well, there ain't no harm done," she continued. "Only sometimes you use words that was just made up so somebody would have a excuse for writing a dictionary. But let me tell you the rest of it about Mister Einstein. You see, he was on the road to All-in-ville, he was, and he was goin' there fast. And, about that time, Danny gets mixed up with a guy that played the curb market—you know that place down there on Broad Street, where a lot of Indians yells their heads off every day, from ten to three. I usta go down there and watch 'em, and think what a fine lot of gent'm'n they'd make for a mob scene in a show. They sure are a wild bunch, mister."

"Yes, very noisy," agreed the Boarder.

"Well," she went on, "in spite of them little talks I usta give Danny about stayin' away from bad company and stickin' to the nice, respectable gent'm'n, like them other gamblers he run with, what does he do but kick in with this short-changin' curb player, Terry Martin! And, mister, that

Street dope must be more insid-ibus than the manicure habit a man gets when the lady's pretty.

"It stuck to Danny like snow in a ditch. It wasn't long b'fore he was pickin' up the mornin' paper and talkin' real wise about Old Hat copper stock bein' good for a two-point raise, and such a line of cheap bunk, that never did sound as good and classy as his nice old hundred-to-one horse chatter. No, sir.

"But he followed it, like a footpad trailin' a man with a bank roll. There was no let up to him, at all. Every day it was the same, till I got a crool attack of the pip listenin' to it; and I sure was scared to death for fear them Wall Street men would get all he had, and make a couple of bums of us. Gee, but I was scared! You see, mister, my Danny was fightin' another man's game, and that ain't no brainy trick."

"Did he get in very deep?" the Boarder asked.

"I was comin' to that," Mrs. Sweeny continued. "He never told me what he was doin'; but one night he come home madder than a vaudeville amateur that's just got the hook.

"'Belle,' he says, takin' a paper from his pocket, and throwin' it on the floor, 'if I ever say "stocks" to you again, just toss a piano leg at me,' he says 'or whatever's handy,' he says.

"'What's the matter, Danny, dear?' I says.

"'Nough's the matter,' he says.

"'What you been doin'?' I says.

"'Nothin' and nobody,' he says. 'Somebody's been doin' me,' he says.

"'Brace faro?' I says.

"'Aw, Belle,' he says, 'I ain't no child like that. But I been a come-on,' he says, 'worse than the kid that stays up all night to catch Sandy Claus,' he says.

"'You been playin' them stocks?' I says.

"'Not playin' 'em, Belle,' he says, 'not playin' 'em, at all. People don't play 'em; all they does is to hand money to the man, and then say "Thank you," when he tells 'em to go and get more and come back. No, I ain't been playin' 'em.'

"'What you done, then?' I says.

"'I done just this here thing,' he says. 'Martin gives me a hot tip that Old Hat copper is goin' to twenty-five, sure, by the end of the week. So I buys a hundred shares at fifteen. I bought it outright, for I wasn't goin' to take no chances on that margin thing. And Martin pats me on the back, and says I'm a wise guy for to make sure of my winnin's at the beginning. Could I of did more, Belle?'

"'Oh, Danny,' I says, 'them stocks —them wicked stocks! Why didn't you stick that money on a good horse? Don't you remember promisin' me a long time ago to try to do right?' I says.

"'I know,' he says, real sorrowful, 'but a guy's got to fall down once in a while, ain't he? Well, I've went and did it, Belle,' he says. 'That there stock started to go back the day after I got it, and now look at it! Fifteen dollars a share it was worth a week ago, and now it's down to one and a half. To-morruh it will be sellin' round fifteen cents, Belle, for I read it on a market bulletin that the Old Hat mine's petered out. But I ain't goin' to make no holler. I'm stung,' he says, 'and I know it. But remember this here, Belle: I don't never touch no stock no more as long as I live.'

"And, take it from me, mister, he never did. He wouldn't even pick up that stock certificate from the floor. He was through with it.

"'Don't have nothin' to do with it, Belle,' he says. 'Let it go. It's worse stuff to fool with than what you fed me last week, and I got ptomaine poisonin' from——'

"'Canned lobster,' I finishes for him.

"'Yep, that's it,' he says. 'Let the old stingerino alone,' he says.

"And so I gathers it up from the floor and chucked it in a drawer with a marked deck of cards and some loaded dice and a few other keepsakes I've got to remember him with."

"Those losses happen in speculation," said the Boarder sympathetically.

"That was a bright remark, mister," she observed. "Of course they happen. Do you s'pose I read this in a dream book? I know only too well that it happened, b'cause Danny had promised me a five-hundred-dollar set of furs, and I didn't get it, Danny bein' out fifteen hundred dollars, and also bein' so low in his mind that he felt as if he was standin' on his head. Wait; I'll get that there piece of stock, and show it to you."

She hurried from the room, returning presently with a creased and rumpled green stock certificate, which she deposited on the Boarder's desk.

"That's it," she said, "and it's what you might call a tombstone for two failin's. It marks Danny's passin' up the stock game and Mister Einstein's wavin' so-long to the ponies. For that very night, while me and Danny was sittin' round, talkin' over his new resolution, Mr. Einstein rings our bell and come in, lookin' doleful as a mornin' after. Gee, he was that sorrowful!

"'Mr. Sweeny,' he says, after Danny had pushed him into a chair, 'them ponies has got me. I been vacuum cleaned by 'em,' he says.

"'Ain't that too bad, now,' says Danny.

"'Ain't it, though,' says Mister Einsteain.

"'How much you got left?' asks Danny.

"'I got a dollar and a quarter comin' for pressin' five pairs of pants,' says Mister Einstein, 'but I alwus have to wait on them parties,' he says.

"'Ain't that too bad, now,' says Danny.

"'Ain't it, though,' says Mister Einstein, 'for now I got to make it a failure,' he says, in that queer talk of his.

"'Can't I do nothin'?' says Danny.

"'If I had a hundred,' says Einstein, 'I could stall things off, and save my business,' he says, 'and keep on pressin' the gents' pants,' he says.

"Danny thought real deep for as much as half a minute, mister, it bein' his way not to do things in a hurry. Then he says:

"'Einstein,' he says, 'kin you say you won't do a thing, and then keep on not doin' it?'

"'Sure I can,' says Mister Einstein.

"'Then,' says Danny, 'you and me do a swear-off on the same day,' he says; 'or, keepin' strict to the facts, I done it this afternoon, and you do it to-night. I quit playin' the stock market, Einstein,' he says, 'for this dear wife of mine——'

"'Guess again, Danny,' I says; 'you done it because they trimmed you.'

"'For this dear wife of mine—did you speak, Belle?—Mr. Einstein,' he says, and I knowed better than to butt in again. 'And now, are you willin' to sing au revoir to them ponies?'

"'Sure,' says Einstein, 'all the verses and the chorus.'

"'Then,' says Danny, 'b'fore I give you that century you want, stand up.'

"Einstein, he stood.

"'Hold up your right hand,' says Danny.

"'You might as well order 'em both up,' says Mister Einstein, 'for I'm that willin',' he says.

"'Now,' says Danny, 'repeat this here solemn oath—listen, Einstein: "I swear, and it goes both ways, and includes the lookout, to chop the ponies; yours truly—what's your initials?—I. M. Einstein."'

"'Gladly will I do it,' says the feller. And he hadn't hardly got through b'fore Danny hands him the hundred. Wasn't he a fine gent'm'n, my Danny, mister?"

"He seems to have been good-hearted," said the Boarder cautiously. He never had been able to determine whether the lamented husband of Mrs. Sweeny was a faulty saint or a plain criminal. During the latter part of his landlady's story, he had been examining the stock certificate which she had brought him. "Are you sure that this is valueless?" he now asked.

"You can have it for the two weeks' board you owe me," she responded pleasantly.

The Boarder flushed.

"I have a particular friend in the brokerage business," he said, moving toward the door. "I'll call him on the

telephone, and make an inquiry about Old Hat copper. You might as well be sure."

"Go on," she assented grimly, "but you can't get me excited with any such talk as that. If I go to the mountains this summer, that old piece of paper won't take me."

The Boarder left the room, but he soon came back, and Mrs. Sweeny knew by the look on his face that he had no good news.

"It is worth nothing," he said, giving her the certificate. "Briggs says it's dead. The company was a wild-cat affair, and the stock never had any but speculative value, and the boom in it collapsed. I'm sorry, Mrs. Sweeny."

"I ain't," she flashed back, "b'cause I knew it wasn't any good, all the time. But you've went and interrupted my story about Mister Einstein, the poor feller! Do you know, mister, I've had a lot of fun in my time bein' sorry for people? Well, I have. It makes me feel good to feel bad, once in a while. I s'pose I'd go to funerals 'most every day if I knew more people here, but it's so hard to get acquainted!"

"Yes," said the Boarder sympathetically, "and one must be so careful about meeting people here."

"That's just it," agreed Mrs. Sweeny, "but you can take it from me, them Einsteins is nice folks, even if they ain't rich. They'd of went down and out that time if it wouldn't of been for Danny. But that hundred set Mister Einstein on his feets again, and it wasn't long b'fore he was pressin' all the pants in the neighborhood, happy as ever.

"And he kept goin', all right, too, until some little time ago. Then his wife gets sick and a baby dies, and there was so many expenses that he couldn't of met 'em if all the pants wearers had three legs, givin' him a third more money to the pair.

"He was up here to see me about it, blubberin', and sayin' so help him, he didn't know what to do. So I says to myself: 'Belle Sweeny, somehow you can get them three meals a day and keep pretty well catched up with the rent, and here's this poor Mister Einstein that has got more troubles than a preacher with a son!'

"And there didn't seem to be but one thing to do, which was to stake him along, just as my Danny done. I done it, mister. I let him have my pile, and I do hope he'll soon get back on Sunshine Avenue again. As for me, if I can't go to the mountains, I can go to the roof, which is as good as several millions of folks here can get in the summer time. Life ain't so bad, if you only get your head together, and do the things that's possible. It don't cost nothing on the roof."

The Boarder smiled at her philosophy, but he felt very sorry for her. He knew that she needed a change, for the blighting heat of the past few weeks had turned her usual fresh color to a pallor, and the brightness was gone from her eyes. He himself had found the season so unbearable that he had arranged to go away. At first, he was inclined to view his landlady's administration of her financial affairs with vexation; then he laughed.

"She'll always do those things," he told himself.

A week later, as he was adding the finishing touches to a manuscript, Mrs. Sweeny tapped at his door. At his invitation she entered, bringing with her an early edition of an afternoon paper. She moved in a jaded, discouraged way, and there was dejection in her face.

"Mister," she began, "S-T-U-N-G spells stung. Now, if you was a comic-song writer, mebby you could make somethin' out of that line."

"What's wrong now, Mrs. Sweeny?" he asked.

"Nothin' much," she replied. "Somebody said once that riches takes wings, but mine hitched onto a pair of feet; and, gee! how they can go!"

"But I thought you had given your money away," he reminded her.

"I didn't know it, then," she answered, "which only means that I don't know feet that'll fit money when I see 'em."

"Has anything happened to your friend Einstein?" he questioned.

"I kinda hope so—somethin' that he deserves," she said. "But, here, take this paper, and read about him." She extended the journal, which was folded so that a brief news paragraph was conspicuous. The Boarder took it, and read the following:

The police have been asked to find I. M. Einstein, a tailor, who had a small shop at 891 West Eighty-fourth Street. It is said that he was unable to withstand the lure of the race tracks and stooped to petty crime to follow them. He passed forged checks on tradesmen in the neighborhood, realized on his stock of goods, borrowed money wherever he could, and disappeared, leaving a wife and six children wholly without the necessities of life. From recent remarks of his, the police think they will find him hanging around some race track. He has recently been talking about a system of beating the races, and it is believed that brooding over it turned his head and caused his disappearance.

"Ain't it fierce?" exclaimed Mrs. Sweeny, as the Boarder finished.

"I call it downright hard luck," he said emphatically, "and I hope he is caught, and placed behind the bars."

"What good would that do me?" she inquired calculatingly. "I don't want him sent away; I want my money back."

"There appears to be little hope of that," he said.

"It looks that way," she agreed. "Still," reflectively, "he may make a killin' on some lucky bet, and come back. Them horse bugs has had them streaks of luck. And there's this about 'em—sometimes they'll pay you back when they've got a bank roll."

The Boarder, however, was disposed to regard the situation from a gloomy viewpoint. The money seemed to him irretrievably lost. He tried to think of some consoling platitude that might fit the situation, but his heart was too full of real sympathy for Mrs. Sweeny to permit the utterance of conventional things.

"What are you going to do?" he asked presently.

"Kiss them two hundred iron men good-by," she promptly replied.

"Well," he said, "I'm just as sorry as I can be. I wish——" He abruptly stopped, and gazed intently at the paper, at which he had been idly glancing.

"What is it?" Mrs. Sweeny questioned.

The Boarder seemed not to hear her. He had caught sight of a scare head that held him. It was:

THE OLD HAT A LIVE WIRE.

SPECTACULAR RISE IN LONG DEAD ISSUE.

In another minute he had leaped to his feet.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. Mrs. Sweeny stared at this unusual display of emotion.

"Mebby if you tell me why, I will," she temporized.

"Read that!" he cried, handing her the paper, and indicating the item.

"Read it, Mrs. Sweeny; read it!"

Mrs. Sweeny, still wondering at the Boarder's extraordinary excitement, took the paper. As the headline met her glance, an inkling of the truth flashed upon her; the next instant she was eagerly reading the text:

The sensation of the Street during the early morning trading was the resurrection of Old Hat copper, an issue that has long been considered practically dead. Rumor got busy early, in effect that the Lydenhams had quietly bought in great blocks of the stock and intended to develop the mine, which adjoins the famous Yellow Dog, a big payer. On this rumor the stock jumped to 5. Later, when it was confirmed, it skyrocketed to 12, amid the wildest excitement among the curb brokers.

Old Hat came on the market a few years ago with a fine flourish, but the boom collapsed. . . .

Mrs. Sweeny read no farther.

"What does it mean, mister?" she asked, a puzzled look on her face.

"Mean!" he exclaimed, glancing hastily at his watch, "why, it means that your hundred shares is worth twelve hundred dollars—maybe more. It is one o'clock now, and there is no telling what Old Hat has done since that paper

was printed. Wait; I'll telephone, and find out."

He ran from the room, but Mrs. Sweeny did not obey his injunction to wait; she hurried after him and watched breathlessly as he snatched the receiver from the hook and called a number.

"Let me talk to Mr. Briggs," he said, when the broker's office answered. "Briggs? . . . Yes. . . . What is Old Hat now? . . . Fourteen, five-eights? . . . Thank you. I'll call again in a minute."

He hung up the receiver, and turned to Mrs. Sweeny.

"Your stock is quoted at fourteen and five-eights. That means that you can sell it at once for between fourteen and fifteen hundred dollars. Shall I tell Mr. Briggs to sell it for you?"

"Fif-teen-hundred-dollars!" breathed Mrs. Sweeny, in an awed tone, "fifteen-hundred-dollars! For me?"

"Yes," confirmed the Boarder nervously; "but be quick about your decision. You have that much money at your command now. But maybe in another five minutes a slump will start."

"Then I'd lose it?" she asked.

"Yes—but be quick. Shall I sell?" There was a nervous tremor in his voice.

"Oh, my, goodness, yes," Mrs. Sweeny cried, "sell it!" Then, almost before the Boarder could turn to the telephone, she ordered:

"Stop!"

"But you may lose——"

"Ain't I got a chance to win more?" she asked calmly.

"Yes, but——"

"Then I'm goin' to take it. If my Danny was here, he'd say I was a fine sport to play this good bet only to show. Not me. S'pose you call up that party and ask him what it is now."

"We might go down to the Newriche Hotel, just a block below here, and watch the ticker," the Boarder suggested.

"Not me," Mrs. Sweeny objected. "Danny told me once that them things was the burglars' jimmies of Wall Street, and I ain't goin' to have nothin' to do with 'em. Call up the gent-'m'n."

The telephone receiver clicked, and in another minute Briggs was calling off a quotation.

"He says it's fifteen and a quarter ——" began the Boarder.

"Good," interrupted Mrs. Sweeny; "I guess I made some money by havin' my nerve along."

"But," objected the agitated Boarder, "you may lose it all by waiting. Please sell, Mrs. Sweeny."

"I won't," she stoutly replied. "I'm goin' out in my kitchen and watch my little alarm clock for ten minutes. Then we'll ask the party again how is Old Hat." And straightway she marched to the rear of the apartment, ignoring the Boarder's pleading that she stay and look to her interests. She remained away until the time was up, then she hurried in.

"Ask him again," she commanded.

The Boarder called Briggs.

"It's seventeen flat now," he reported.

"I guess," said Mrs. Sweeny slowly, "I guess you might as well tell him to sell it—no, I'll wait a bit."

"Mrs. Sweeny!" expostulated the Boarder.

"I'll wait a bit—I can use the money," she insisted. And then, through another agonizing ten minutes, she conversed happily about everything save the stock market.

"Now, let's take another peek," she suggested. Briggs was called, and quoted the stock.

"Eighteen and a quarter," said the Boarder, in a husky voice.

Mrs. Sweeny reflected for a moment. Then she said:

"Sell!"

And as the Boarder turned to explain the situation to Briggs, and put in the order, she sank limply into a chair.

"My, but that was hard on a party's nerves," she gasped, as the Boarder hung up the receiver. "It's different from horse racin', 'cause you can't see 'em go."

"Well," said the Boarder, in a fagged tone, "I'm glad it's over."

"Me, too," she echoed. "And if I knew Mister Einstein's ad-dress, I'd write him to never mind about that two hundred, and hope him luck at makin' a killin' with that money he stole. You see, mister, if it wouldn't of been for him, I'd never got that Old Hat on my mind, and this here million-dollar thing wouldn't of happened. Didn't I tell you he was a fine gent'm'n, mister?"

"You did," agreed the Boarder, with a fine forgetfulness for details, "and he has more than upheld your estimate of him. Now, I think I'd better take that stock certificate down to Briggs' office, and get your check. Let me congratulate you. You've got enough now to go to the mountains and——"

"Mountains nothin'," she interrupted. "So many people goes there, that there ain't no class to 'em any more. I ain't committin' myself, mister, but would you mind fetchin' me home some time-tables, tellin' when some of them ships starts for Europe?"

WHO WOULD BE A JOURNALIST?

THE editor of the *Swampoodle Palladium* was busy. His sheet was on the verge of going to press. Jenkins was writing up his account of the Borough Fair; Dobson was putting the finishing touches to his "Pleasant Half-day Rambles Among the Wonders of Swampoodle—No. 23, McCockle's Tannery"; while Griffiths, the new reporter, was feverishly transcribing his notes of a great speech made by the State senator at the town hall.

Altogether, it looked like being a very "hot" number.

"Griffiths," cried the editor, "it's time that copy went down. Is it finished?"

"All but a short sentence,' yelled back the young reporter. "But I can't for the life of me make out what that is."

"Put in 'Loud applause,' and rush it down," ordered the editor. "No time to waste."

"But——"

"Put it in and rush it down, Griffiths!"

Obediently the new reporter added the two words and sent his "copy" to the composing room. Next morning the editor's eye met the following extract from Senator Brown's great speech:

"Friends, I will detain you but a few minutes longer. (Loud applause.)"

Griffiths is now looking for another job—on a quarterly for preference.

THE SMALLEST BOOK IN THE WORLD

THE smallest book in existence is in the possession of Mr. Plant, a gentleman living in London. The little book contains a collection of the "Kathas," or sacred chants of the Maharatt Brahmins, entirely written in the Maharatt dialect signs. It is composed of one hundred leaves, in octagon form, measuring about three-tenths of an inch in width, fastened together and covered with silk. The ink is of a magnificent lustrous black, and each page has a margin in vermilion. This remarkable specimen of caligraphy is contained in an elegant covered crystal case; at first view it produces the effect of a butterfly of different shades of chestnut colors rather than that of a book. In spite of numerous researches, it has not been possible to trace the origin of this curious miniature book; all that is known of its history is that it escaped destruction in an almost miraculous fashion during the revolt of the Sepoys. It was carried off at this epoch at Ghanzi by a British soldier, who sold it to its present owner.

This is the fourth installment of Mr. Coolidge's great Western story. It began in the number dated March 1st.

Hidden Water

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "Money-Getter .45," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Rufus Hardy, the son of an old army officer, while in a frontier town attracts the attention of Jefferson Creede, the foreman of Dos S, Judge Ware's ranch. Creede, whose patience with the sheep men has become exhausted, is on the point of open warfare with them. Judge Ware insists on peaceable tactics, and on the suggestion of Creede, appoints Hardy as foreman. Hardy diplomatically entertains Jasper Swope, one of the leading sheep men, at the ranch, and prevails on him to keep the sheep off the upper pasture. Hardy urges legal steps against the sheep invasion; and, the trouble having been averted for once, goes with Creede to Old Bill Johnson's ranch to help him ship a portion of his herd. After delivering the herd, Hardy meets Swope, who makes him an offer to become one of the chief sheep herders. Hardy declines, and they part in anger. The judge comes to the ranch, bringing his daughter Lucy and her friend Kitty Bonnair. Creede immediately falls in love with Kitty, and Hardy and Lucy renew an old friendship. There is a lively encounter between the cowboys and sheep herders; and the judge, anxious to get out of the country before he becomes particeps criminis to a lawless outrage, leaves the ranch, taking the girls with him—not however, before Creede secures a kiss from the proud lips of Kitty Bonnair. Creede isn't quite in love with Kitty, for most of his great heart is given to Sallie Winship, a demure little lady, whose relatives spirited her away from the dangerous fascinations of the big cow-man.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHICO AND GRANDE.

BETWEEN the mouth of Hell's Hip Pocket and the cow camp, at Carrizo Creek, there lie three high ridges and three broad valleys, all running north and south from the Peaks to Broncho Mesa—the heart of the upper range; and there, in compact bands, the invaders held their sheep. From the lower levels, they strayed out gradually over the rocky mesa; above, they clambered up toward the wooded peaks; but, at night, the sheep men worked back to the three ridges, and camped close together, for defense.

After many years of struggle, they had at last obtained their legal rights—the sheep were up to the ears in grama, eating out the heart of the cow country—but Jeff Creede was just over the hill, and the Mexicans were afraid. For years now, the huge form of "Grande" had loomed before them whenever they entered that forbidden range, and they had always given way before him. And now he had the little man Chico with him—the son of a soldier, so it was said, and a gentleman of *Categoria*—he always carried a pistol, and his eyes were stern and hard. What would not Chico and Grande do to them, now that they were like bees robbed of their long-hoarded honey, who have nothing left but their stings!

So the word passed around amongst the herders and camp rustlers, and Jim and Jasp rode from one camp to the other, cursing and exhorting, and holding them to their work. The hour of victory had come, but their triumph was poisoned by a haunting fear for their sheep. One hundred thousand sheep—five hundred thousand dollars' worth—the accumulation of a lifetime—and all in the hands of these cowardly Mexicans, not half of whom would fight!

For the day or two that they held together they were safe, but when they

spread out—and spread they must, to reach the western pass—then the cow men could rush them like lions that raid a corral, scattering one band after the other, and the coyotes would do the rest. That was the joint in the armor of the sheep men, and it robbed them of their sleep.

Evening came, and the fires of the camp rustlers on the ridges lit up the dust cloud that hung in the east. The hateful bleat of the sheep was hushed, at last, and the shrill yell of the coyotes rose from every hilltop, bidding farewell to the sun; for, as vultures and unnumbered birds of prey hovered in the wake of barbarian armies, casting their dread shadows upon the living and glutting upon the dead, so the coyotes follow tirelessly after the sheep, gorging upon chance carcasses and pulling down the strays.

As the wild, gibbering chorus rose and quavered back from the cliffs, the cow men at Carrizo glanced up from their supper, and swore, and in the general preoccupation Hardy put down his plate and slipped away to the corral. He was sitting on the fence, listening to the mad yelping of the coyotes, and watching the shadows gather among the peaks, when Creede strolled over and joined him. There were times when he could read Hardy like a book, but at others the little man's thoughts were hidden, and he brooded by himself. On such occasions, after a sufficient interval, Jeff esteemed it his duty to break in upon these unprofitable ruminations, and bring him back to the light. So he clambered up on the top log, and joined in the contemplation of nature.

"Hear them dam' kiotes," he observed sociably. "They'd cry that way if they'd had a chicken dinner all around. I bet every one of 'em has got wool in his teeth right now. Never you mind, Birdie," he continued, apostrophizing a peculiarly shrill-voiced howler, "I'll give you a bellyful of mutton pretty soon, if it's the last act. What *you* going to do now, Rufe?"

"Well," answered Hardy, "I think I'll try and earn my salary by moving a few sheep. And of course we want to gather every beef critter we can, now, while they're fat. The sheep seem to be hugging the mountain pretty close—what's the matter with working the Pocket Butte to-morrow, and while the boys are riding we'll warn all the stragglers down there to keep up against the hills; then, as soon as we get 'em located, we'll jump in some day and move 'em!"

"Huh?" inquired Creede, shoving back his hat, and staring. "Did I hear you say 'move 'em'? Well—er—I thought you left your gun at home," he suggested guardedly.

"That's right," admitted Hardy, "but don't you let that worry you any—I told you I'd help move those sheep, and I'll do it! We don't need guns, anyhow. Why, I'd just as soon tackle a rattlesnake bare-handed as go after Jasp Swope with my six-shooter. That's just what he's looking for, boy, with all those thirty-thirties behind him, and he'll have plenty of witnesses there to swear us into Yuma, too. I tell you, Jeff, I've been thinking this over, and I believe my boss is right."

"Sure," said Creede, showing his teeth in the twilight.

"Say, let up on that, will you?" exclaimed Hardy irritably. "I'm talking business. Now you let me tell you something." He paused, and fixed his eye on the dust cloud intently. "I've moved that many sheep twice," he said, throwing out his hand impressively, "and I left my gun at home."

"That's right," conceded Creede.

"Well, now, I'll tell you what I'll do," continued Hardy. "If you'll leave your gun at home, too, and stay with me on this, I'll undertake to shoot the last sheep out through West Pass inside of a week. And the only chance we take is of getting shot at or arrested for assault and battery. The Territorial prison end of this gun business never did appeal to me, anyway."

"No—nor me, either! But what's the scheme?"

The big cowboy leaned forward eagerly, his eyes flashing as he half guessed the plan.

"We ride out together," said Hardy, his voice far away, as if he saw it in his mind's eye, "unarmed—and we notify every sheep herder we see to move. If Jasp Swope or any of his men kill us while we're unarmed, it'll be cold-blooded murder, and there'll be witnesses to prove it. And if the sheep don't move, *we'll move 'em!* What kind of a crime is that, anyway—to drive sheep off the public range? There isn't an officer of the law within sixty miles, anyhow—and if anybody pulls a gun on us, we can slug him in self-defense."

"Sure," agreed Creede, "but suppose one of them big-headed Chihuahua Mexicans should happen to shoot you?"

"Well, then, I'd be dead," said Hardy soberly. "But wouldn't you rather be dead than shut up in that hellhole down at Yuma?"

"Yes!" cried Creede, holding out his hands, as if taking an oath, "I would, by God!"

"Well, come on, then!" said Hardy, and they shook hands on it like brothers.

When the rodeo outfit was gathered together in the morning, Jefferson Creede deliberately unstrapped his cartridge belt, and threw his pistol back onto his bed. Then he winked at his partner, as if, rightly understood, the action was in the nature of a joke, and led the way to Pocket Butte.

"You fellows rake the ridges to Bull-pit Valley," he said, briefly assigning every man to his post. "Rufe 'n me'll hold 'em up for you about four o'clock, but don't rush the funeral—we're goin' to move a few sheep first."

He smiled mysteriously as he spoke, staving off their pointed queries with equivocal answers.

"See you later," he observed, turning his horse into a sheep trail, and with that the outfit was forced to be content.

The offending sheep were found feeding along the eastern slope of a long ridge that led down from the upper ground, and the herders were camped on the summit. There were four men gathered about the fire, and, as the cowboys approached, three of them picked up their carbines and sat off on one side, fingering the locks nervously.

The appearance of Jeff Creede spelled trouble for all sheep men, and there were few camps on Broncho Meca which did not contain a herder who had been unceremoniously moved by him. But this time the fire-eating cow man rode grandly into camp, without any awe-inspiring demonstrations whatever.

"Are those your sheep?" he inquired, pointing to the grazing herd.

"*Si*, señor," responded the boss herder humbly.

"Very well," said Creede, "move 'em, and move 'em quick. I give you three days to get through that pass." He stretched a heavily muscled arm very straight toward the notch in the western hills, and turned abruptly away.

Hardy swung soberly in behind him, and the frightened Chihuahuanos were beginning to breathe again after their excitement, when suddenly Jeff stopped his horse.

"Say," he said, turning to the boss, "what you carryin' that cow's horn for?"

At this pointed inquiry, the boss herder flinched, and looked downcast, toying uneasily with the primitive instrument at his side.

"To blow," he answered evasively.

"Well, go ahead and blow it," suggested Creede amiably. "No—go on! I don't care what happens. Aw, here, let me have it a minute!"

He grabbed the horn impatiently, wiped the mouthpiece with his sleeve, drew a long breath, and blew. A deep bass roar answered to his effort, a bellow such as the skin-clad hunters of antiquity sent forth when they wound the horn for their hounds, and the hills and valleys of Carrizo and the upper mesa echoed to the blast.

"Say, that's great!" exclaimed the big cowboy, good-naturedly resisting the appeals of the herder. "I used to have one like that when I was a boy. Oh, I'm a blower, all right—listen to

this, now!" He puffed out his chest, screwed his lips into the horn, and blew again, loud and long.

"How's that for high?" he inquired, glancing roguishly at his partner. "And I could keep it up all day," he added, handing the horn back, "only I've got business elsewhere."

"Oyez, amigo," he said, bending his brow suddenly upon the Mexican herder, "remember, now—in three days!" He continued the sentence by a comprehensive sweep of the hand from that spot out through the western pass, favored each of the three Chihuahuanos with an abhorrent scowl, and rode slowly away down the hogback.

"Notice anything funny over on that ridge?" he asked, jerking his head casually toward the east. "That's Swope and Co.—the Sheep Men's Protective Association—coming over to rescue *companero.*" A line of rapidly moving specks proved the truth of his observation, and Creede's shoulders shook with laughter as he noted their killing pace.

"I tumbled to the idee the minute I set eyes on that cow's horn," he said. "It's like this. Every boss herder has a horn—if he gits into trouble, he blows it, and all hands come a-runnin' to shoot holes in Mr. Cow Man—think I'll make one myself."

He halted behind a rock, and scrutinized the approaching horsemen over the top.

"That's Jasp, in front," he observed impersonally. "I wouldn't mind ownin' that black mule of hisn, neither. We'll jest wait until they dip down into the cañon, and then double in back of him, and scare up them *hombres* over at the mouth of Hell's Hip Pocket. We want to git 'em started out of that. I believe you're right, though, Rufe—we can run this bunch out without firin' a shot."

That evening, after the day's riding, Creede sat down on his heels by the fire, and heated the end of an iron rod. In his other hand, he held a horn, knocked from the bleaching skeleton of a steer that had died by the water, and to its end, where the tip had been sawed off, he applied the red-hot iron, burning a hole through to the hollow centre.

"Jim," he said, turning to one of the Clark boys, "do you want a little excitement to-morrow? Well, then, you take this old horn, and go play hide 'n' seek with Jasp. Keep him chasin', and, while the rest of the boys are gatherin' cattle, Rufe and me will move a few sheep."

"Well, say," broke in Ben Reavis impatiently, "where do us fellers come in on this play? I thought there was goin' to be a few 'chap lessons' and a little night work."

"Well," responded the rodeo boss philosophically, "any time you fellers want to go up against them thirty-thirties, you can do so. It's your own funeral, and I'll promise to do the honors right. But I'm a law-abidin' cuss myself—I'm all for the law now, ever since I talked with Jim Swope—it's the greatest graft they is."

He paused, busily scraping his horn with a piece of glass.

"They's no doubt about it, fellers," he said, at last, "we've been slow in the head. It's a wonder we ain't all of us makin' hair bridles in Yuma, by this time. I used to think that if you didn't like a sheep man's looks, the way to do was to wade in and work him over a little; but that's a misdemeanor, and it don't go now. It took as good a man as Rufe, here, to put me wise, but I leave my gun in camp after this. I've got the greasers buffaloed, anyhow, and Jasp knows if he plugs me when I'm unarmed it'll be a sure shot for the pen. The time may come when guns is necessary, but I move that every man leave his six-shooter in his bed, and we'll go after 'em with our bare hands. What d'ye say, Ben?"

Ben Reavis rose up on one elbow, rolled his eyes warily, and passed a jet of tobacco juice into the hissing fire.

"Not f'r me," he said, with profane emphasis.

"No, ner f'r me, either!" chimed in Charley Clark. "A man stays dead a long time in this dry climate."

"Well, you fellers see how many of

my steers you can ketch, then," said Creede, "and I'll move them sheep myself—leastways, me and Rufe."

"All right," assented Reavis resignedly, "but I want you to hurry up—I saw a cloud o' dust halfway to Hidden Water this afternoon."

The next morning, as the rodeo outfit hustled out to pick up what cattle they could before they were scattered by the sheep, Jim Clark, tall, solemn-faced, and angular, rode by devious ways toward the eastern shoulder of the Four Peaks, where a distant clamor told of the great herds which mowed the mountain slopes like a thousand sickles.

Having seen him well on his way, Creede and Hardy galloped down the cañon, switched off along the hillside, and, leaving their horses among the rocks, climbed up on a rocky butte to spy out the land below. High ridges and deep cañons, running down from the flanks of the Four Peaks, lay to the east and north and west; and to the south they merged into Broncho Mesa.

As Jefferson Creede looked out across that noble landscape, which he had struggled so resolutely to save, and saw the dust clouds of the sheep drifting across it, the tears came to his eyes and blinded his keen vision. Here at last was the end of all his struggles and all his dreams—another year, or two years, and the mesa would be devastated utterly; his cows would be hollow-flanked and gaunted; his calves would totter and die, their tender lips pierced with the spiny cactus, upon which their hard-mouthed mothers starved; and all that fair land, which he knew and loved so well, would be lost to him forever. He raised his hand to his eyes, as if shading them from the sun, and brushed the tears away.

"Well, look at those sons o' guns hike," he said, baring his teeth venomously, "and every band headed for Hidden Water. Go it, you tarriers—and if you can't stop to eat the grass, trample on it! But wait, and if I don't push in some greaser's face to-day, it'll be because every one of them bands is headin' for the western pass."

He clambered slowly down from his perch, and swung up into the saddle.

"Talkin' never did do much good with a sheep herder," he observed wisely. "As the old judge used to say, 'you've got to appeal to his better nature'—with a club."

The most southerly of the seven bands was strung out in marching order, the goats in front, the hungriest sheep in the lead; and on both flanks and far behind, the groups and clusters of feeders, pushing out into the grassy flats, and rearing up against the trees and bushes. Without a word to the herders, Creede and Hardy took down their ropes, and, swinging the *hondas* upon the goats, turned the advance guard northwest. The main herd and the drag followed—and then the herders, all in a bunch, for courage.

"This is the last time I talk to you," said Creede, his voice stifled with anger. "Turn to the north, now, and keep a-goin'."

He put spurs to his horse and rode west to the second herd, and by noon they had turned all seven toward the western pass. Every herder had his cow's horn, and some of them were blowing continually, but no one answered, and a messenger was sent east for aid. They camped for the heat of the day, making smoke upon the ridges, but no help came.

As the sun sank low and the curly-necked Merinos rose up from their huddle and began to drift, the Mexicans turned them, perforce, to the north, looking back sulkily toward the mouth of Hell's Hip Pocket, where other smokes rose against the sky. Until the sun set they traveled, making their three miles and more, and not until they had corraled their flocks for the night did "Chico" and "Grande," the little and big terrors of the sheep, give way from their strenuous labors.

It was two hours after dark when they rode wearily into the camp at Carrizo Creek. The fire was dying down to embers, and the rodeo outfit, worn out, had turned in, some in the tin house, others outside, under the brush

ramada, to escape the dew. No one moved as they approached, but Creede did not scruple to wake up Jim Clark in order to learn the news.

"How'd the old horn work?" he inquired cheerily.

"No good," grunted Clark, rolling over.

"Aw, go on, wouldn't they chase ye?"

"Nope, nothin' doin'. Say, lemme sleep, will ye?"

"Sure," said Creede, "when I git through with you. Which way was them sheep travelin'?"

"Well, some was goin' straight up over the Four Peaks and the rest was p'intin' west. You and your old horn—I nigh blowed my fool head off, and never got a rise! They was all blowin' them horns over by the Pocket this aft."

"Um," said Creede, "they was *all* blowin', hey? And what else was they doin'?"

"Shootin', fer further orders, and driftin' their sheep. They's about a hundred thousand right over the hill."

"Huh!" grunted Creede, turning to his belated dinner, "what d'ye make of that, Rufe?"

"Nothing," replied Hardy, "except more work."

It seemed as if he had hardly fallen asleep, when Creede was up again, hurling the wood on the fire.

"Pile out, fellers!" he shouted. "You can sleep all day bimebye. Come on, Rufe—d'ye want to find them sheep in the corral when you go back to Hidden Water?" And so, with relentless energy, he roused them up, divided out the work, and was off again for Broncho Mesa.

It was early when they arrived at the first deserted sheep camp; but, search as they would, they could see no signs of the sheep.

They rode for the second camp, farther to the west, and it, too, was deserted, the sheep tracks cunningly milled, in order to hide the trail.

"They're gittin' foxy," commented Creede, circling wide to catch the trend of their departure, "but I bet you money no bunch of Chihuahua greasers can hide twenty thousand sheep in my back yard, and me not know it. And I'll bet you further that I can find every one of them sheep, and have 'em movin' before twelve o'clock, noon."

Having crystallized his convictions into this sporting proposition, the rodeo boss left the wilderness of tracks, and headed due south, riding fast until he was clear of sheep signs.

"Now, here's where I cut all seven trails," he remarked to his partner, "I happen to know where this sheep outfit is headin' for."

With which enigmatic remark he jerked a thumb toward Hidden Water, and circled to the west and north. Not half an hour later he picked up a fresh trail, a broad path, stamped hard by thousands of feet; and, spurring recklessly along it until he sighted the herd, he plunged, helter-skelter, into their midst, where they were packed like sardines in the broad pocket of a dry wash.

"Hey, there! *Whoopee—hep—hep!*" he yelled, plowing his way into the pack; and Hardy, swinging quickly around the flank, rushed the ruck of them forward in his wake. Upon the brow of the hill, the boss herder and his helpers brandished their carbines, and shouted, but their words were drowned in the blare and bray which rose from below.

Shoot they dared not, for it meant the beginning of a bloody feud, and their warnings were unheeded in the mêlée. The herd was far up the wash, and galloping wildly toward the north before the frantic Mexicans could catch up with it on foot, and even then they could do nothing but run along the wings to save themselves from a "cut."

More than once, in the nighttime, the outraged cow men of the Four Peaks country had thus dashed through their bands, scattering them to the wolves and the coyotes, destroying a year's increase in a night, while the herders, with visions of "chap lessons" before them, fired perfunctory rifle shots at the moon.

It was a form of reprisal that they,

liked least of all, for it meant a cut, and a cut meant sheep wandering aimlessly without a master until they became coyote bait—at the rate of five dollars a head.

The patron was a kind man, and called them *compadres* when he was pleased, but if one of them suffered a cut he cursed, and fired him, and made him walk back to town. Hence, when Chico and Grande suddenly gave over their drive, and rode away to the northwest, the Mexican herders devoted their attention to keeping all the herd together, without trying to make any gun plays. And when the stampede was abated, and still no help came, they drifted their sheep steadily to the north, leaving the camp rustlers to bring up the impedimenta as best they could. Jasper Swope had promised to protect them whenever they blew their horns, but it was two days since they had seen him, and the two *Americanos* had harried them like hawks.

Never had armed men so lacked a leader as on that day. Their orders were to shoot only in self-defense—for a war was the last thing which the Swope brothers wanted, with their entire fortunes at stake—and no show of weapons could daunt the ruthless Grande and Chico.

All the morning, the cow horns bellowed and blared, as, sweating and swinging their *hondas,* the stern-eyed *Americanos* rushed band after band away.

Not a word was passed—no threats, no commands, no warnings for the future—but, like avenging devils, they galloped from one herd to the other and back again, shoving them forward relentlessly, even in the heat of noon.

At evening, the seven bands, hopelessly mixed and mingled in the panic, were halfway through the long pass, and the herders were white with dust and running—but not until dusk gathered in the valleys did Creede rein in his lathered horse and turn grimly back to camp.

His face was white and caked with dust, the dirt lay clotted in his beard, and only the whites of his eyes, rolling and sanguinary, gave evidence of his humanity; his shirt, half torn from his body by plunging through the cat claws, hung limp and heavy with sweat, and the look of him was that of a madman, beside himself with rage.

The dirt, the sweat, the grime, were as heavy on Hardy, and his eyes rolled like a negro's beneath the mask of dust, but weariness had overcome his madness, and he leaned forward upon the horn.

They glanced at each other indifferently, and then slumped down to endure the long ten miles which lay between them and home. It had been a stern fight, and the excitement had lulled their hunger, but now the old, slow pang gnawed at their vitals, and they rolled like drunkards in the saddle.

It was a clear, velvety night and still, after the wind of the day; their horses jogged dumbly along, throwing up their head at every step from weariness, and the noises of the night fell dully upon their jaded ears; but, just as they turned into Carrizo Creek Cañon, Creede suddenly reined in old Bat Wings, and held up his hand to Hardy.

"Did you hear that?" he asked, still listening. "There! Didn't you hear that gun go off? Well, I did—and it was a thirty-thirty, too, over there toward the Pocket."

"Those herders are always shooting away their ammunition," said Hardy peevishly. "Come on, let's get back to camp."

"They don't shoot in the nighttime, though,' grumbled Creede, leading off again, "I'll bet ye some of them greasers has seen a ghost. Say," he cried, "the boys may be out doin' some night ridin'!"

But when they rode into camp, every man was in his blankets.

"Hey, what's all that shootin' goin' on over there?" he called, waking up the entire outfit in his excitement.

"Sheep men," responded some sleeper briefly.

"Cleanin' their guns, mebbe," suggested another, yawning. "Did you move 'em, Jeff?"

"You betcher neck!" replied Creede promptly, "and I'm goin' back in the mornin', too."

The morning turned black, and flushed rosy, and fell black again, but for once the merciless driver of men slept on, for he was overweary. It was a noise, far away, plaintive, insistent, which finally brought him to his feet—the bleating of ewes to lambs, of lambs to mothers, of wethers to their fellows—beautiful in itself as the great elemental sounds of the earth, the abysmal roarings of winds and waves and waterfalls, but to the cow man hateful as the clamors of hell.

As Creede stood in his blankets, the salt sweat of yesterday still in his eyes, and that accursed blat in his ears, his nerves gay way suddenly, and he began to rave. As the discordant babel drew nearer and nearer, his passion rose up like a storm that has been long brewing, his eyes burned, his dirty face turned ghastly, and, grabbing up his six-shooter, he stood, like a prophet of destruction calling down the wrath of God Himself, if there was a God, upon the head of every sheep man.

But, even as he cursed, the first dirty brown wave spewed in over the ridge, and swept down upon their valley.

Then, in a moment, his madness overcame him, and, raising his heavy pistol, he emptied it against them defiantly, while the resounding cliffs took up his wrath, and hurled it back.

A herder, with his rifle, leaped up on a distant rock, and looked toward their camp, and at the sight the black anger of Jeff's father came upon him, filling him with the lust to kill. He rushed into the house, and came out with a high-power rifle.

"You will stand up there and laugh at me, will you?" he said, deliberately raising the sights. "You——"

He rested the rifle against one of the ramada posts, and caught his breath to aim, while the cow men regarded him cynically, yet with a cold speculation in their eyes. Hardy alone sprang forward, to spoil his aim, and for a minute they bandied words, like pistol shots, as they struggled for the gun. Then, with a last wailing curse, the big cowboy snapped the cartridge out of his rifle, and handed it over to his partner.

"You're right," he said. "Let the dastard live, but if I ever git another chanst at Jasp Swope I'll kill him, if I swing for it! He's the boy I'm lookin' for, but you see how he dodges me? I've been movin' his sheep for two days! He's afraid of me—he's afraid to come out and fight me like a man! But I'll git 'im—I'll git 'im yet!"

"All right," said Hardy soothingly, "you can do it, for all of me—but don't go to shooting Mexicans off of rocks, as if they were turkey buzzards—that's what gets people into the pen. Now, you just take my advice for once, and wash some of that dirt off your face. You're locoed, man—you're not a human being—and you won't be until you wash up and get your belly full."

Half an hour later they sat down to breakfast, the burly fighting animal and the man who had taught him reason; and as they ate the fierce anger of the cowboy passed away like mists before the morning sun. He heaped his plate up high, and emptied it again, drinking coffee from his big cup, and, as if ashamed of his brutishness, he began forthwith to lay out a campaign of peace.

With sheep scurrying in every direction across the range in the great drive that was now on, it was no use to try to gather cows—what they had they could day herd, and the rest would have to wait—the thing to do now was to protect the feed around the water, so that the cattle would not have to travel so far in the heat of summer.

No objection being offered, he gave each man a water course to patrol, sending one over into the Pocket to see what had happened to Bill Johnson; and then, with his gun packed in his bed, he started back with Hardy to watch over Hidden Water.

The sun was well up as they topped the high ridge; and the mesa, though plowed through and through by the trails of the hurrying sheep, still shim-

mered in its deceptive green. Not for a month had there been a cloud in the sky, and the grass on the barren places was already withering in the heat; yet in the distance the grease wood and the palo verdes and giant cactus blended into one mighty sheet of verdure.

Only on the ground where the feed should be were there signs of the imminent drouth—and, where the sheep had crossed, the ground lay hard and baked, or scuffled into dust. In the presence of those swift destroyers, the dreaded *"año seco"* had crept in upon them, unnoticed, but soon it would scourge the land, with heat and dust and failing waters, and cattle lowing to be fed.

And there, before their eyes, clipping down the precious grass, tearing up the tender plants, shearing away the browse, moved the sheep, army after army, phalanx and cohort, drifting forward irresistibly.

For a minute the two men sat gazing hopelessly; then Creede leaned forward in his saddle, and sighed.

"Well," he observed philosophically, "they're movin', anyhow."

They rode down the long slope, and, mounting a low roll, paused again apathetically, to watch a band of sheep below.

"Say," exclaimed Creede, his eyes beginning to burn, "d'ye notice how them sheep are travelin'? And look at them other bands, back yonder! By thunder!" he cried, rising in his stirrups, "we've got 'em goin'! Look at the dust out through the pass—and clean to Hell's Hip Pocket—they're hikin', boy—they're hittin' it up for The Rolls! But what in the world has struck 'em?"

He stood up straight in his saddle, swinging his head from east to west, but no band of horsemen met his eye. He looked again at the flock below him—the goats, forever in the lead, heading straight for the western pass; the herders swinging their carbines upon the drag—and seemed to study upon the miracle.

"Have you got any money to spare, Rufe?" he inquired quietly.

"Sure," responded Hardy.

"Well, then," said Creede deliberately, "I'd like to make you a sporting proposition. I'll bet you forty dollars to the price of a drink that old Bill Johnson has been shootin' up their camps. Will you go me? All right, and I'll make you a little side bet—I'll bet you any money that Jim Swope has lost some sheep!"

He spurred his horse recklessly down the hill, grinning, and at the clatter of rocks the fearful herders jumped forward, and raised a great clamor behind their sheep, whistling and clubbing their guns, but the heart of the monster Grande was no longer turned to wrath. He laughed, and called out to them, leaping his horse over washouts, and waving his black hat gayly.

"Cuidado, hombres," he shouted, "be careful—do not hurry—look at the nice grass!' But, despite this friendly admonition, the herders still yelled and whistled at their sheep, jabbing them spitefully with the sharp muzzles of their rifles, until, at last, all riot and confusion, they fled away, bleating, into the west.

CHAPTER XVII.

BAD BLOOD.

The sheep were on the run, drifting across Broncho Mesa as if the devil was after them, and Creede could hardly stay on his horse from laughing; but when he drew near to Hidden Water his face changed. There was a fresh sheep trail in the cañon, and it led away from the ranch. He spurred forward like the wind, his eyes upon the tracks, and when he came in sight of the house he threw down his hat, and swore.

Of all the God-forsaken places in Arizona, the Dos S ranch was the worst. The earth lay bare and desolate before it; the woodpile had disappeared; the bucket was thrown down the well. Never had the flat, mud building seemed so deserted or Tommy so tragic in his welcome—the pasture gate was down, and even that holy of holies, the branding corral, stank of

sheep. Only the padlocked house had been respected, and that, perforce, since nothing short of a sledgehammer could break its welded chain.

Unfastening the battered door, they entered the living room, which once had been all light and laughter. There lay the dishes, all clean and orderly, on the table, the floors swept, the beds made, some withered flowers on Hardy's desk.

"Huh," grunted Creede, looking it over coldly, "we're on the bum, all right, all right, now. How long since they went away?"

"'Bout a year," replied Hardy. And his partner did not contradict him.

They cooked a hasty meal, and ate it, putting the scraps in the frying pan for Tommy.

"Go to it, Tom," said Creede, smiling wistfully as the cat lapped away at the grease. "He never could git used to them skirts rustlin' round here, could he?" And then there was a long silence.

Tommy sat up, and washed his face contentedly, peering about with intent yellow eyes, and sniffing at the countless odors with which his world was filled—then, suddenly, with a low, whining growl, he lashed across the room like a tiger, and leaped up into his cat hole. This was a narrow tunnel, punched through the adobe wall near the door, and boxed in with a projecting cribbing, to keep out the snakes and skunks. Through it, when his protectors were away, he could escape the rush of pursuing coyotes—or sally forth with equal ferocity when sheep dogs were about.

He peered out of his porthole for a moment warily, then his stump tail began to twitch, he worked his hind claws into the wood, and leaped.

A yelp of terror from the *ramada* heralded his success, and Creede ran, like a boy, to look.

"He's jumped one, by Joe!" he exclaimed. "What did I tell ye?—that cat is a holy terror on dogs!"

The dog in question, a slinking, dispirited cur, wagged its tail apologetically from a distance, shaking its bloody ears, while Tommy swelled and hissed viciously at him from his stronghold. It was a sheep dog, part collie, part shepherd, and the rest plain yellow—a friendly dog, too, and hungry; but the heart of Creede, ordinarily so tender, was hardened by his disasters.

"Git out of here!" he commanded roughly. "Git, you yap, or I'll burn you up with a bullet!"

"This is what comes of leavin' your gun off," he grumbled, as he unbound his bed, and grabbed up his pistol. But as he stepped out into the open to shoot, his barbarity was checked by a clatter of hoofs, and, looking up, he saw Jasper Swope on his big black mule, ambling truculently in across the open.

"Hyar!" he shouted, shaking his fist angrily, "don't you shoot my dog, or I'll be the death of ye!"

"Oh, I don't know," responded Creede, bristling back at him. "Keep the blame pup away, then—or my cat'll eat 'im up! Well, I notice you took the occasion to come down and sheep me out," he observed, as Swope pulled up before the door.

"I *did* not," retorted the sheep man promptly, but grinning, nevertheless, at the damage, "but I see some other feller has, though, and saved me the trouble." He ran his eye approvingly over the devastated homestead; and then, rising in his stirrups, plunged suddenly into his set speech.

"I've took a lot off'n you, Jeff Creede," he shouted, swinging his arms wildly, "but I've got a bellyful of this night work! And I come down to tell you that next time you shoot up one of my camps there'll be trouble!"

"I never shot up your old camp," growled Creede, "nor any other camp. I'm dam' glad to hear that somebody else did, though," he added vindictively, "and I hope to God he fixed you good and proper. Now, what can I do for you, Mr. Swope?" he inquired, thrusting out his chin. "I suppose you must be hurryin' on, of course."

"No!" cried Swope, slapping his saddle horn vehemently, "I come down here to git some satisfaction out of

you! My sheep has been killed, and my men has been intimidated on this here public range, and I want to tell you right now, Mr. Creede, that this funny business has got to stop!"

"Well, don't choke!" said the cow man, fingering his gun coldly. "Go ahead and stop it, why don't you?"

He paused, a set smile upon his lips, and for a moment their eyes met in the baleful glare which rival wolves, the leaders of their packs, confer upon each other. Then Hardy stepped out into the open, holding up his hand for peace.

"You are mistaken, Mr. Swope," he said quietly. "Jeff hasn't shot up any camps—he hasn't even packed a gun for the last three days."

"Oh, he hain't, hey?" sneered the sheep man, showing his jagged teeth. "He seems to have one now."

"You betcher neck I have," cried Creede, flaring up at the implication, "and if you're lookin' for trouble, Jasp Swope, you can open up any time."

"W'y, what's the matter with you?" protested Swope righteously. "You must have somethin' on your mind, the way you act."

Then, without waiting for a reply to this innuendo, he turned his attention to Hardy.

"He hain't shot up any camps," he repeated, "ner packed a gun for three days, hey? Now, here's where I prove you a liar, Mr. Smarty—I seen him with my own eyes take six shots at one of my herders this very mornin'—*and you was there!*"

He punctuated his speech by successive downward jabs of his grimy forefinger, as if he was stabbing his adversary to the heart, and Hardy turned faint and sick with chagrin. Never had he hated a man as he hated this great, overbearing brute before him—this man beast, with his hairy chest and freckled hands, that clutched at him like an ape's. Something hidden, a demon primordial and violent, rose up in him against this crude barbarian, with his bristling beard and gloating pig eyes, and he forgot everything but his own rage at being trapped.

"You lie!" he cried passionately; and then, in his anger, he added a word which he had never used, a word which goes deep under the skin, and makes men fight.

For a moment the sheep man sat staring, astounded by his vehemence; but, before he could move, the sudden silence was split by the yelp of a dog—a wild, gibbering yell, that made them jump and bristle like hounds that are assailed from behind—and, mingling stridently with it, was the harsh snarl of a cat. There was a swift scramble in the dust by the door, an oath from the sheep man, and the yellow dog dashed away again, with Tommy at his heels.

Creede was the first man to regain his nerve, and, seeing his pet triumphant, he let out a whoop of derisive laughter.

"Ah-hah-hah!" he hollered, pointing with his pistol hand, "look at that, will ye—*look* at 'im—*yee-pah*—go after 'im, Tommy."

The fighting blood of the sheep man sided in as quickly with his dog.

"I'll kill that dam' cat!" he yelled, swinging down from his saddle, "if you don't let up! Hey, Nip! Sick 'im!" He turned, and motioned to his other dog, which had been standing dumbly by, and instantly he joined in the chase. "Sick 'em, boy, *sick 'em!*" he bellowed, urging him on, and before Creede could get his face straight, the long, rangy brindle had dashed up from behind and seized Tommy by the back.

"Git out o' that!" thundered the cow man; and then, without waiting on words, he threw his gun down on the dog, and fired.

"Here—none of that, now!" shouted Swope, whipping out his own pistol, and, as he leaped forward, he held it out before him, like a sabre, pointed straight for the cow man's ribs. His intentions may have been of the best, but Hardy did not wait to see. The brindle dog let out a surprised yelp, and dropped—but before Creede could turn to meet his enemy his partner leaped in between them, and with a

swift blow from the shoulder struck the sheep man to the ground.

It was a fearful blow, such as men deal in anger, without measuring their strength or the cost, and it landed on his jaw.

Creede had seen men slugged before, in saloon rows and the rough fights that take place around a town, but never had he seen a single blow suffice—the man's head go back, his knees weaken, and his whole body collapse, as if he had been shot. If he had been felled like a bull in the shambles, that goes down in spite of his great strength, Jasper Swope could not have been more completely stunned—he lay sprawling, his legs turned under him, and the hand that grasped the six-shooter relaxed slowly and tumbled it into the dust.

For a minute, the two partners stood staring at each other, the one still planted firmly on his feet, like a boxer, the other with his smoking pistol in his hand.

"By thunder, boy," said Creede slowly, "you was just in time that trip." He stepped forward, and laid the fallen man out on his back, passing his gun up to Hardy as he did so.

"I wonder if you killed him," he muttered, feeling Jasp's bull neck; and then, as Hardy ran for some water, he remembered Tommy. But there was no Tommy—only a little heap of fur lying very still out in the open.

"My God!" he cried, and, leaving the man, he ran out, and knelt down beside it.

"Pussy!" he whispered, feeling hopelessly for his heart; and then, gathering the forlorn little wisp of fur in his arms, he hurried into the house without a word.

He was still in hiding when Jasper Swope came to and sat up, his hair drenched with water and matted with dirt. Staring doubtfully at the set face of Hardy, he staggered to his feet—and then the memory of the fight came back to him, and he glared at him with a drunkard's insolence.

"Where's my gun?" he demanded, suddenly clasping his hand upon the empty holster.

"I'll take care of that for you," answered Hardy pointedly. "Now, you pile onto that mule of yours, and pull your freight, will you?" He led the black mule up close, and boosted his master into the saddle, but Swope was not content.

"Where's Jeff Creede?" he demanded. "Well, I wanter see him, that's all. And, say, Mr. Smart Alec, I want that gun, too; see?"

"Well, you won't get it," said Hardy.

"I will that," declared Swope, "'nd I'll git you, too, Willie, before I git through. I've had enough of this. Now, gimme that gun, I tell ye, or I'll come back with more of 'em, and take it!"

He raised his voice to a roar, muffled to a beastlike hoarseness by his swollen jaws, and the *ramada* reverberated like a cavern as he bellowed out his challenge. Then the door was snatched violently open, and Jefferson Creede stepped forth, looking black as hell itself. In one hand he held the sheep man's pistol, and in the other his own.

"Here!" he said, and, striding forward, he thrust Swope's gun into his hand. "It's loaded, too," he added. "Now, if you've got any shootin' to do, go to it!"

He stepped back quickly, and stood ready, his masterful eyes bent upon his enemy in a scowl of unquenchable hate. They faced each other, waiting for that mysterious psychic prompting without which neither man nor beast can begin a fight. Hardy stood aside, without a word. It was a showdown, and, bulldog fighter though he was, Jasper Swope weakened. The anger of his enemy overcame his hostile spirit without a blow, and he turned his pistol away.

"That's all I wanted," he said, shoving the gun sullenly into its holster. "They's two of you, and——"

"And you're afraid," put in Creede promptly. He stood gazing at the downcast sheep man, his lip curling contemptuously.

"I've never seen a sheep man yet," he said, "that would fight. You've lis-

tened to that blat until it's a part of ye —you've run with them Mexicans until you're kin to 'em—you're a coward, Jasp Swope, and I always knowed it." He paused again, his eyes glowing with the hatred that had overmastered his being. "My God!" he exploded, "if I could only git you to fight to-day, I'd give everything I've got left."

The sheep man's gaze was becoming furtive as he watched them. He glanced sidewise, edging away from the door; then, pricking his mule with his spurs, he galloped madly away, ducking his head at every jump, as if he feared a shot.

"Look at that cowardly dastard!" sneered Creede bitterly. "D'ye know what he would do if that was me?—he'd shoot me in the back. Ah, God A'-mighty, that dog of his got Tommy before I could pull a gun! Rufe, I could kill every sheep man in the Four Peaks for this—every dam' one of 'em —and the first dog that comes in sight of this ranch will stop a thirty-thirty." He stopped, and turned away, cursing and muttering to himself.

"God A'mighty!" he moaned, "I can't keep nothin'." And, stumbling back into the house, he slammed the door behind him.

A gloom settled down over the place, a gloom that lasted for days. The cowboys came back from driving the town herd, and, going up on the mesa, they gathered a few head more—then the heat set in before its time, and the work stopped short. For the steer that is roped and busted in the hot weather dies suddenly at the water; the flies buzz about the ears of the new-marked calves and poison them, and the mother cows grow gaunt and thin from overheating.

Not until the long summer had passed could the riding continue—the steers must be left to feed down the sheeped-out range; the little calves must run for sleepers until the fall rodeo. Sheep and the drouth had come together, and the round-up was a failure. Likewise, the cow men were broke.

For a week, Creede and Hardy dawdled about the place, patching up the gates and fences, and cursing the very name of sheep. A spirit of unrest hovered over the place, a brooding silence which spoke only of Tommy and those who were gone, and the two partners eyed each other furtively, each deep in his own thoughts. At last, when he could stand it no longer, Creede went over to the corner and dug up his money.

"I'm goin' to town," he said briefly.

"All right," responded Hardy; and then, after meditating for a while, he added: "I'll send down some letters by you."

"Say, Rufe, do me a favor, will ye?"

The tone of Creede's voice, suddenly soft and diffident, startled Hardy.

"Why, sure, Jeff," he said, "if I can."

"No, no 'ifs' about it!" persisted Creede. "A lucky feller like you, with everythin' comin' his way, ought to be able to say 'Yes' once in a while without havin' a pullback on it."

"Huh," grunted Hardy suspiciously, "you better tell me what you want first."

"Well, I want you to write me a letter," blurted out Creede. "I can keep a tally book, and order up the grub from Bender, but—durn the luck—when it comes to makin' love on paper, I'd rather wrastle a bear. Course you know who it is, and you savvy how them things is done. Throw in a little po'try, will you, and—and—say, Rufe, for God's sake, help me out on this!"

He laid one hand appealing upon his partner's shoulder, but the little man squirmed out from under it impatiently.

"Who is it?" he asked doggedly. "Sallie Winship?"

"Aw, say," protested Creede, "don't throw it into a feller like that. Sal went back on me years ago. You know who I mean—Kitty Bonnair."

"Kitty Bonnair!" Hardy had known it, but he had tried to keep her name unspoken. Battle as he would, he could not endure to hear it, even from Jeff.

"What do you want to tell Miss Bon-

nair?" he inquired, schooling his voice to a cold quietness.

"Tell her?" echoed Creede ecstatically. "W'y, tell her I'm lonely as hell now she's gone—tell her—well, there's where I bog down, but I'd trade my best horse for another kiss like that one she give me, and throw in the saddle for *pelon*. Now, say, Rufe, don't leave me in a hole like this. My hands are as stiff as a burnt rawhide, and I can't think out them nice things to say; but I love Kitty jest as much as you love Miss Lucy—mebbe more—and—I wanter tell her so!"

He ended abjectly, gazing with pleading eyes at the stubborn face of his partner, whose lips were drawn tight like iron.

"We—every man has to—no, I can't do it, Jeff," he stammered, choking. "I'd—I'd help you, if I could, Jeff—but she'd know my style. Yes, that's it. If I'd write the letter, she'd know it was from me—women are quick that way. I'm sorry, but that's the way it is. Every man has to fight out his own battle, in love."

He paused, and fumbled with his papers.

"Here's a good pen," he said, "and—and here's the paper." He rose up dumbly from the table.

"I'm going to bed," he said, and slipped quietly out of the room. As he lay in his blankets, he could see the gleam of light from the barred window and hear Jeff scraping his boots uneasily on the floor. True, indeed, his hands were like burnt rawhide from gripping at ropes and irons, his clothes were greasy, and his boots smelled of the corral—and yet—she had given him a kiss! He tried to picture it in his mind—Kitty smiling—or startled, perhaps—Jeff, masterful, triumphant, laughing. Ah, God—it was the same kiss she had offered him, and he had run away.

In the morning, there was a division between them, a barrier which could not be overcome. Creede lingered by the door a minute awkwardly, and then rode away. Hardy scraped up the greasy dishes, and washed them moodily. Then the great silence settled down upon Hidden Water, and he sat alone in the shadow of the *ramada*, gazing away at the barren hills.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BIG DRUNK.

For two weeks now, Hardy had been alone, ever since Jeff went down to Bender, and with the solitary's dread of surprise he stepped out into the *ramada* regularly, scanning the western trail with eyes grown weary of the earth's emptiness.

At last, one day, as the sun sank low, throwing its fiery glare in his eyes, he saw the familiar figure against the sky—Creede, broad and bulky, and topped by his enormous hat, and old Bat Wings, as raw-boned and ornery as ever. Never until that moment had Hardy realized how much his life was dependent upon this big, warm-hearted barbarian, who clung to his native range instinctively.

"Hello, sport," said Creede, smiling wantonly. "Could you take a pore fellow in over night?"

"Sure thing," responded Hardy gayly. "Where've you been all the time?"

And Creede chanted:

> "Down to Bender,
> On a bender,
> Oh, I'm a spender,
> You bet yer life!

"And I'm broke, too," he added, sotto voce, dropping off his horse, and sinking into a chair.

"Well, you don't need to let that worry you," said Hardy. "I've got plenty. Here!" he went down into his pocket, and tossed a gold piece to him, but Creede dodged it listlessly.

"Nope," he said, "money's nothin' to me."

"What's the matter?" asked Hardy anxiously. "Are you sick?"

"Yes," answered Creede, nodding his head wearily, "sick and tired of it all." He paused, and regarded his partner solemnly. "I'm a miserable failure, Rufe," he said. "I ain't *got* nothin', and I ain't *worth* nothin'. I never *done*

nothin'—and I ain't got a friend in the world."

He stopped, and gazed at the barren land despondently, waiting to see if his partner would offer any protests.

"Rufe," he said, at last, his voice tremulous with reproach, "if you'd only helped me out a little on that letter—if you'd only told me a few things—well, she might have let me down easy, and I could've took it. As it was, she soaked me."

Then it was that Hardy realized the burden under which his partner was laboring—the grief that clutched at his heart, the fire that burned in his brain—and he could have wept, now that it was too late.

"Jeff," he said honestly, "it don't do any good now, but I'm sorry. I'm more than sorry—I'm ashamed. But *that* don't do you any good, either, does it?"

He stepped over, and laid his hand affectionately upon his partner's shoulder, but Creede hunched it off impatiently.

"No," he said, slowly and deliberately, "not a dam' bit." There was no bitterness in his words, only an acknowledgment of the truth. "They was only one thing for me to do after I received that letter," he continued, "and I done it—I went on a hell-roarin' drunk. That's right—I filled up on that forty-rod whisky until I was crazy drunk, an' then I picked out the biggest man in town, and fought him to a whisper."

He sighed, and glanced at his swollen knuckles, which still showed the marks of combat.

"That feller was a jim-dandy scrapper," he said, smiling magnanimously, "but I downed 'im, all right. I couldn't quite lick the whole town, but I tried—and I certainly gave 'em a run for their money, while it lasted. If Bender don't date time from Jeff Creede's big drunk, I miss my guess a mile. Well, after I'd punished enough booze to start an Injun uprisin', and played the faro bank for my wad, I went to sleep; and, when I woke up, it seemed a lo-ong time ago, and I could look back, and see jest how foolish I'd been.

"I could see how *she'd* jollied me up and got me comin', playin' me off aginst Bill Lightfoot; and then I could see how she'd tantalized me, like that mouse the cat had when you was down in Bender; and then, I could see where I had got the big head bad, thinkin' I was the only one—and all the time she was *laughin'* at me! Oh, it's nothin', now—I kin laugh at it myself in a month—but I'm so dam' *shamed* I could cry."

He flopped down in his chair, a great hulk of a man, and shook his head gloomily.

"They ain't but one girl I ever knowed," he said solemnly, "that wasn't stringin' me, and that was Sallie Winship. Sal liked me—dam'd if she didn't. She cried when she went away—but the old lady wouldn't stand for no bow-legged cowpuncher—and so I git euchred every time."

For lack of some higher consolation, Hardy cooked up a big supper for his low-spirited partner, and after he had done the honors at the feast, the irrepressible good health of the cowboy rose up and conquered his grief, in spite of him.

He began by telling the story of his orgy, which, apparently, had left Bender a wreck.

When it was all over, and his memory came down to date, he suddenly remembered a package of letters tied up in his coat, which was still on the back of his saddle. He produced them forthwith, and, like a hungry boy, who sees others eat, sat down to watch Rufe read. The first in the pack was from Lucy Ware, and as Hardy read it his face softened, even while he knew that Creede was watching.

"Say, she's all right, ain't she?" observed Jeff, when his partner looked up.

"That's right," said Hardy, "and she says to take you on again as foreman and pay you for every day you didn't carry your gun."

"No!" cried Creede, and then he laughed quietly to himself. "Does that

include them days I was prizin' up hell down in Bender? Oh, it does, eh? Well, you can tell your boss that I'll make that up to her before the summer's over."

He leaned back, and stretched his powerful arms, as if preparing for some mighty labor. "We're goin' to have a drouth this summer," he said impressively, "that will have the fish packin' water in canteens. Yes, sir, the chaser is goin' to cost more than the whisky before long—and they's goin' to be some dead cows along the river. But here—git busy, now—here's a letter you overlooked."

He pawed over the pile purposely, and thrust a pale blue envelope before Hardy—a letter from Kitty Bonnair—and his eyes took on a cold, fighting glint as he observed the fatal handwriting.

"By thunder," he cried, "I hain't figured out yet what struck me! I never spoke a rough word to that girl in my life—and she certainly gimme a nice kiss when she went away—but jest as soon as I write her a love letter, w'y she—she—— W'y, hell, Rufe, I wouldn't talk that way to a sheep herder, if he didn't *know* no better. Now, you jest read that"—he fumbled in his pocket, and slammed a letter down before his partner—"and tell me if I'm wrong! No, I want you to do it. Well, I'll read it to you, then!"

He ripped open the worn envelope, squared his elbows across the table, and opened the scented inclosure defiantly.

But before he could read it, Hardy reached out suddenly, and covered it with his hand.

"Please don't, Jeff," he said, his face pale and drawn. "It was all my fault—I should have told you—but please don't read it to me. I—I can't stand it."

"Oh, I don't know," retorted Creede coldly. "I reckon you can stand it if I can. Now, suppose you wrote a real, nice letter—the best you knowed how—to your girl, and she handed you somethin' like this: 'My dear Mr. Creede, yore amazin' letter——' Here, what ye doin'?"

"I won't listen to it!" cried Hardy, snatching the letter away, "it's——"

"Now, lookee here, Rufe Hardy," began Creede, rising up angrily from his chair, "I want to tell you right now that you've got to read that letter or lick me—and I doubt if you can do that, the way I happen to be feelin'. You got me into this in the first place, and now, by golly, you'll see it out! Now you *read* that letter, and tell me if I'm wrong!"

He reared up his head as he spoke, and Hardy saw the same fierce gleam in his eyes that came when he harried the sheep—but there was something beside that moved his heart to pity. It was the lurking sadness of a man deeply hurt, who fights the whole world in his anguish; the protest of a soul in torment, demanding, like Job, that some one shall justify his torture.

"All right, Jeff," he said, "I will read it—only—only don't crowd me for an answer."

He spread the letter before him on the table, and saw in a kind of haze the angry zigzag letters that galloped across the page, the words whose meaning he did not as yet catch, so swiftly did his thoughts rise up at sight of them. Years ago, Kitty had written him a letter, and he had read it at that same table—it had been a cruel letter, but unconsidered, like the tantrum of a child—yes, he had almost forgotten it—but now, like a sudden nightmare, the old horror clutched at his heart.

He steadied himself, and the words began to take form before him—but surely she would be gentle with Jeff, he was so big and kind. Then he read on—slowly—grasping the meaning—and once more his eyes grew big with horror at her words. He finished, and bowed his head upon the table, while the barren room whirled before him.

From his place across the table, the big cowboy looked down upon him, grim and masterful, yet wondering at his silence.

"Well, am I wrong?" he demanded, but the little man made no answer.

Upon the table before Hardy there

lay another letter, written in that same woman's hand—a letter to him, and the writing was smooth and fair. Jeff had brought it to him, tied behind his saddle, and he stood before him now, waiting.

"Am I wrong?" he said again, but Hardy did not answer in words. Holding the crumpled letter behind him, he took up his own fair missive—such a one as he would have died for in years gone by—and laid it on the fire, and when the tiny flame leaped up he dropped the other on it, and watched them burn together.

"Well, how about it?" inquired Creede, awed by the long silence, but the little man only bowed his head.

"Who am I, to judge?" he said.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COW MEN'S DEFENSE.

It was a hard-looking bunch of men that gathered at the Dos S ranch to plan for the fall rodeo. Heat and a long drouth had lined their faces deep, their hands were worn and crabbed from months of cutting brush, and upon them all was the sense of bitter defeat. There would be no branding in the pens that fall—the spring calves were all dead; nor was there any use in gathering beef steers that were sure to run short weight—there was nothing to do, in fact, but count up their losses and organize against the sheep.

It had been a hard summer, but it had taught them that they must stand together, or they were lost. There was no one now who talked of waiting for Forest Reserves, or of diplomacy and peace—every man was for war, and war from the jump—and Jefferson Creede took the lead.

"Fellers," he said, after each man had had his say, "there's only one way to stop them sheep, and that is to stop the first band. Never mind the man—dam' a herder; you can buy one for twenty dollars a month—*git the sheep!* Now, suppose we stompede the first bunch that comes on our range, and scatter 'em to hell—that's *fif-teen thousand dol-lars gone!* God A'mighty, boys, think of losin' that much money when you're on the make, like Jim Swope! W'y, Jim would go crazy! He'd throw a fit—and, more than that, fellers," he added, sinking his voice to a confidential whisper, "he'd go round.

"Well, now, what ye goin' to do?" he continued, a crafty gleam coming into his eye. "Are we goin' to foller some cow's tail around until they jump us again? Are we goin' to leave Rufe, here, to patrol a hundred miles of range, lone-handed? Not on your life—not me! We're goin' to ride this range by day's works, fellers, and the first bunch of sheep we find we're goin' to scatter 'em like shootin' stars—and if any man sees Jasp Swope, I'll jest ask him to let me know. Is it a go? All right—and I'll tell you how we'll do.

"There's only three places that the sheep can get in on us—along the Alamo, over the Juate, or around between the Peaks. Well, the whole caboodle of us will camp up on the Alamo somewhere, and we'll jest naturally ride them three ridges night and day. I'm goin' to ask one of you fellers to ride away up north, and follow them sheep men down, so they can't come a circumbendibus on us again, and I'm goin' to give 'em fair warnin' to keep off of our upper range—and then, the first wool-pullin' sheep herder that sneaks in on Broncho Mesa is goin' to git the scare of his life—and the coyotes is goin' to git his sheep.

"That's the only way to stop 'em! W'y, Jim Swope would run sheep on his mother's grave if it wasn't for the five dollars fine. All right, then, we'll jest fine Mr. Swope fifteen thousand dollars for comin' in on our range, and see if he won't go around. There's only one thing that I ask of you fellers—when the time comes, for God's sake, *stick together!*"

The time came, in late October, when the sheep were on The Rolls. In orderly battalions, they drifted past, herd after herd, until there were ten in sight. If any sheep man resented the silent sentinels that rode along the rim, he

made no demonstration of the fact—and yet, for some reason, every herd sooner or later wandered around until it fetched up against the dead line. There were fuzzy *chollas* farther out, that got caught in the long wool and hurt the shearers' hands; it was better to camp along the Alamo, where there was water for their stock—so the simple-minded herders said, trying to carry off their bluff, but when Creede scowled upon them they looked away sheepishly. The padron had ordered it—they could say no more.

"*Muy bien,*" said the overbearing Grande, "and where is your padron?"

"*Quien sabe!*" replied the herders, hiking up their shoulders, and showing the palms of their hands, and "Who knows?" it was to the end. There was wise counsel in the camp of the sheep men—they never had trouble if they could avoid it, and then only to gain a point. But it was this same far-seeing policy which, even in a good year, when there was feed everywhere, would not permit them to spare the upper range. For two seasons, with great toil and danger, they had fought their way up onto Broncho Mesa, and established their right to graze there—to go around now would be to lose all that had been gained. But for once the cow men of the Four Peaks were equal to the situation. There were no cattle to gather, no day herds to hold, no calves to brand in the pens. Every man was riding, and riding hard.

There was wood on every peak for signal fires, and the main camp was established on the high ridge of the Juate, looking north and south and west. When that signal rose up against the sky—whether it was a smoke by day or a fire by night—every man was to quit his post and ride to harry the first herd. Wherever it came in, that herd was to be destroyed, not by violence, nor by any overt act, but by the sheep men's own methods—strategy and stealth.

For once, there was no loose joint in the cordon of the cow men's defense. From the rim of the Mogollons to the border of Broncho Mesa, the broad trail of the sheep was marked and noted; their shiftings and doublings were followed and observed; the bitterness of Tonto cow men, crazy over their wrongs, was poured into ears that had already listened to the woes of Pleasant Valley—and when, at last, Jasper Swope's boss herder, Juan Alvarez, the same man-killing Mexican that Jeff Creede had fought two years before, turned suddenly aside and struck into the old Shep Thomas trail, that comes out in the deep crotch between the Peaks, a horseman in *chaparajos* rode on before him, spurring madly to light the signal fires.

That night a fire blazed up from the shoulder of the western mountain, and was answered from the Juate. At dawn, ten men were in the saddle, riding swiftly, with Jefferson Creede at their head.

It was like an open book to the cow men now, that gathering of the sheep along the Alamo—a ruse, a feint to draw them away from the Peaks, while the blow was struck from behind. Only one man was left to guard that threatened border—Rufus Hardy, the man of peace, who had turned over his pistol to the boss. It was a bitter moment for him when he saw the boys start out on this illicit adventure; but for once he restrained himself, and let it pass. The war would not be settled at a blow.

At the shoulder of the Peak, the posse of cow men found Jim Clark, his chaps frayed and his hat slouched to a shapeless mass from long beating through the brush, and followed in his lead to a pocket valley, tucked away among the cedars, where they threw off their packs and camped, while Jim and Creede went forward to investigate.

It was a rough place, that crotch between the Peaks, and Shep Thomas had cut his way through chaparral that stood horse-high before he won the southern slope. To the north, the brush covered all the ridges in a dense thicket, and it was there that the cow camp was hid, but on the southern slope, where the sun had baked out the soil, the mountainside stretched

away, bare and rocky, broken by innumerable ravines, which came together in a *redondo,* or rounded valley, and then plunged abruptly into the narrow defile of a box cañon. This was the middle fork, down which Shep Thomas had made his triumphal march the year before, and down which Juan Alvarez would undoubtedly march again.

Never but once had the sheep been in that broad valley, and the heavy rains had brought out long tufts of grama grass from the bunchy roots along the hillsides. As Creede and Jim Clark crept up over the brow of the western ridge, and looked down upon it, they beheld a herd of forty or fifty wild horses, grazing contentedly along the opposite hillside, and far below, where the valley opened out into the *redondo,* they saw a band of their own tame horses feeding.

Working in from either side—the wild horses from the north, where they had retreated to escape the drouth; the range animals from the south, where the sheep had fed off the best grass—they had made the broad mountain valley a rendezvous, little suspecting the enemy that was creeping in upon their paradise.

Already the distant bleating of the sheep was in the air; a sheep man rode up to the summit, looked over at the promised land, and darted back, and as the first struggling mass of leaders poured out from the cut trail and drifted down into the valley, the wild stallions shook out their manes in alarm, and trotted farther away.

A second band of outlaws, unseen before, came galloping along the western mountainside, snorting at the clangor and the rank smell of sheep, and Creede eyed them with professional interest as the leaders trotted past.

Many times in the old days he had followed along those same ridges, rounding up the wild horses, and sending them dashing down the cañon, so that Hardy could rush out from his hiding place and make his throw. It was a natural hold-up ground, that *redondo,* and they had often talked of building a horse trap there—but so far they had done no more than rope a chance horse, and let the rest go charging down the box cañon, and out the other end onto Broncho Mesa.

It was still early in the morning when Juan Alvarez rode down the pass and invaded the forbidden land. He had the name of a bad *hombre,* this boss herder of Jasper Swope—the kind that cuts notches on his rifle stock. Only one man had ever made Juan eat dirt, and that man now watched him from the high rocks with eyes that followed every move with the unblinking intentness of a mountain lion.

"Uhr-r! Laugh, you son of a goat," growled Creede, as the big Mexican pulled up his horse and placed one hand complacently on his hip. "Sure, make yourself at home," he muttered, smiling as his enemy drifted his sheep confidently down into the *redondo,* "you're goin' jest where I want ye. Come sundown, and we'll go through you like a house afire. If he beds in the *redondo,* let's shoot 'em into that box cañon, Jim," proposed the big cow man, turning to his partner, "and when they come out the other end, all hell wouldn't stop 'em—they'll go forty ways for Sunday."

"Suits me," replied Jim, "but, say, what's the matter with roundin' up some of them horses, and sendin' 'em in ahead? That boss Mexican is goin' to take a shot at some of us fellers if we do the work ourselves."

"That's right, Jim," said Creede, squinting shrewdly at the three armed herders, "*I'll* tell ye, let's send them wild horses through 'em! Holy smoke—jest think of a hundred head of them outlaws comin' down the cañon at sundown, and hammerin' through that bunch of sheep! And we don't need to git within gunshot!"

"Fine and dandy," commented Jim, "but how're you goin' to hold your horses to it? Them herders will shoot off their guns and turn 'em back."

"Well, what's the matter with usin' our tame horses for a hold-up herd and then sendin' the whole bunch through together? They'll strike for

the box cañon—you can bank on that—and if Mr. Juan will *only*——"

But Mr. Juan was not so accommodating. Instead of holding his sheep in the *redondo* he drifted them up on the mountainside, where he could overlook the country.

"Well, I'll fix you yet," observed Creede, and leaving Jim to watch, he scuttled down to his horse and rode madly back to camp.

That afternoon as Juan Alvarez stood guard upon a hill he saw, far off to the west, four horsemen, riding slowly across the mesa. Instantly he whistled to his herders, waving his arms and pointing, and in a panic of apprehension they circled around their sheep, crouching low and punching them along till the herd was out of sight—and still the four horsemen rode on, drawing nearer, but passing to the south.

But the sheep, disturbed and separated by the change, now set up a plaintive bleating, and the boss herder, never suspecting the trap that was being laid for him, scrambled quickly down from his lookout and drove them into the only available hiding place—the box cañon.

Many years in the sheep business had taught him into what small compass a band of sheep can be pressed, and he knew that, once thrown together in the dark cañon, they would stop their telltale blatting and go to sleep. Leaving his herders to hold them there, he climbed back up to his peak and beheld the cowboys in the near distance, but still riding east.

An hour passed, and the sheep had bedded together in silence, each standing with his head under another's belly as is their wont, when the four horsemen, headed by Jeff Creede himself, appeared suddenly on the distant mountainside, riding hard along the slope. Galloping ahead of them in an avalanche of rocks was the band of loose horses that Alvarez had seen in the *redondo* that morning, and with the instinct of their kind they were making for their old stamping ground.

Once more the sheep man leaped up from his place and scampered down the hill to his herd, rounding up his pack animals as he ran. With mad haste he shooed them into the dark mouth of the cañon, and then hurried in after them, like a badger that, hearing the sound of pursuers, backs into some neighboring hole until nothing is visible but teeth and claws.

So far the boss herder had reasoned well—his sheep were safe behind him and his back was against a rock; a hundred men could not dislodge him from his position if it ever came to a fight—but he had not reckoned upon the devilish cunning of horse-taming Jeff Creede. Many a time in driving outlaws to the river he had employed that same ruse—showing himself casually in the distance and working closer until he had gained his end.

The sun was setting when Creede and his cowboys came clattering down the mountain from the east and spurred across the *redondo,* whooping and yelling as they rounded up their stock. For half an hour they rode and hollered and swore, apparently oblivious of the filigree of sheep tracks with which the ground was stamped—then as the *remuda* quieted down they circled slowly around their captives, swinging their wide-looped ropes and waiting for the grand stampede.

The dusk was beginning to gather in the low valley and the weird evensong of the coyotes was at its height when suddenly from the north there came a rumble, as if a storm gathered above the mountains; then with a roar and the thunder of distant hoofs, the crashing of brush and the nearer click of feet against the rocks a torrent of wild horses poured over the summit of the pass and swept down into the upper valley like an avalanche.

Instantly Creede and his cowboys scattered, spurring out on either wing to turn them fair for the box cañon, and the tame horses, left suddenly to their own devices, stood huddled together in the middle of the *redondo,* fascinated by the swift approach of the outlaws.

Down the middle of the broad valley they came, flying like the wind before

their pursuers; at sight of Creede and his cowboys and the familiar hold-up herd they swerved and slackened their pace, then as the half-circle of yelling cow men closed in from behind they turned, and rushed straight for the box cañon, their flint-like feet clacking like whetted knives as they poured into the rocky pass.

Catching the contagion of the flight, the tame horses joined in of their own accord, and a howl of exultation went up from the Four Peaks cow men as they rushed in to complete the overthrow. In one mad whirl they mingled —wild horses and tame, and wilder riders behind; and before that irresistible onslaught Juan Alvarez and his herders could only leap up and cling to the rocky cliffs like bats. And the sheep! A minute after there were no sheep. Those that were not down were gone—scattered to the winds, lost, annihilated!

Seized by the mad contagion, the cowboys themselves joined in the awful rout, spurring through the dark cañon like devils let loose from hell. There was only one who kept his head and waited, and that was Jefferson Creede. Just as the last wild rider flashed around the corner he jumped his horse into the cañon, and, looking around, caught sight of Juan Alvarez, half-distraught, crouching like a monkey upon a narrow ledge.

"Well, what—the—hell!" he cried, with well-feigned amazement. "*I* didn't know you was here!"

The sheep man swallowed and blinked his eyes, that stood out big and round like an owl's.

"Oh, that's all right," he said.

"But it wouldn't 'a' made a dam' bit of difference if I had!" added Creede, and then, flashing his teeth in a hectoring laugh, he put spurs to his horse and went thundering after his fellows.

Not till that moment did the evil-eyed Juan Alvarez sense the trick that had been played upon him.

"*Cabrone!*" he screamed, and whipping out his pistol he emptied it after Creede, but the bullets spattered harmlessly against the rocks.

Early the next morning Jefferson Creede rode soberly along the western ridge of Broncho Mesa, his huge form silhouetted against the sky, gazing down upon the sheep camps that lay along the Alamo, and the simple-minded Mexicans looked up at him in awe.

But when the recreant herders of Juan Alvarez came skulking across the mesa and told the story of the stampede, a sudden panic broke out that spread like wildfire from camp to camp. Orders or no orders, the timid Mexicans threw the sawhorses onto their burros, packed up their blankets and moved, driving their bawling sheep far out over The Rolls, where before the *chollas* had seemed so bad.

It was as if they had passed every day beneath some rock lying above the trail, until, looking up, they saw that it was a lion, crouching to make his spring. For years they had gazed in wonder at the rage and violence of Grande Creede, marveling that the padron could stand against it, but now the big man had struck, and *bravo* Juan Alvarez had lost his sheep. Hunt as long as he would he could not bring in a tenth of them. *Ay, que malo!* The boss would fire Juan and make him walk to town; but they who by some miracle had escaped, would flee while there was yet time.

For two days Creede rode along the rim of Broncho Mesa—that dead line which at last the sheep men had come to respect—and when at last he sighted Jim Swope coming up from Hidden Water with two men who might be officers of the law he laughed and went to meet them. Year in and year out Jim Swope had been talking law—law; now at last they would see this law, and find out what it could do.

One of the men with Swope was a deputy sheriff, Creede could tell that by his star; but the other man might be almost anything—a little, fat man with a pointed beard and congress shoes; a lawyer, perhaps, or maybe some town detective.

"Is this Mr. Creede?" inquired the deputy, casually flashing his star as they met beside the trail.

"That's my name," replied Creede. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, Mr. Creede," responded the officer, eying his man carefully, "I come up here to look into the killing of Juan Alvarez, a Mexican sheep herder."

"The killin'?" echoed Creede, astounded.

"That's right," snapped the deputy sheriff, trying to get the jump on him. "What do you know about it?"

"Who—me?" answered the cow man, his eyes growing big and earnest as he grasped the news. "Not a thing. The last time I saw Juan Alvarez he was standin' on a ledge of rocks way over yonder in the middle fork—and he certainly was all right then."

"Yes? And when was this, Mr. Creede?"

"Day before yesterday, about sundown."

"Day before yesterday, eh? And just what was you doin' over there at the time?"

"Well, I'll tell ye," began Creede circumstantially. "Me and Ben Reavis and a couple of the boys had gone over toward the Pocket to catch up our horses. They turned back on us and finally we run 'em into that big *redondo* up in the middle fork. I reckon we was ridin' back and forth half an hour out there gittin' 'em stopped, and we never heard a peep out of this Mexican, but jest as we got our *remuda* quieted down and was edgin' in to rope out the ones we wanted, here comes a big band of wild horses that the other boys had scared up over behind the Peaks—roaring down the cañon and into us.

"Of course, there was nothin' for it then but to git out of the way and let 'em pass, and we did it, dam' quick. Well, sir, that bunch of wild horses went by us like the mill tails of hell, and, of course, our *remuda* stompeded after 'em, and the whole outfit went bilin' through the box cañon, where it turned out Juan Alvarez had been hidin' his sheep. That's all I know about it."

"Well, did you have any trouble of any kind with this deceased Mexican, Mr. Creede? Of course, you don't need to answer that if it will incriminate you, but I just wanted to know, you understand."

"Oh, that's all right," responded the cow man, waving the suggestion aside with airy unconcern. "This is the first I've heard of any killin', but bein' as you're an officer, I might as well come through with what I know. I don't deny for a minute that I've had trouble with Juan. I had a fist fight with him a couple of years ago, and I licked him, too—but seein' him up on that ledge of rocks when I rode through after my horses was certainly one of the big surprises of my life."

"Uh, you was surprised, was ye?" snarled Swope, who had been glowering at him malignantly through his long recital. "Mebbe——'

"Yes, I was surprised!" retorted Creede angrily. "And I was like the man that received the gold-headed cane—I was *pleased*, too, if that's what you're drivin' at. I don't doubt you and Jasp sent that dam' greaser in there to sheep us out, and if he got killed you've got yourself to thank for it. He had no business in there, in the first place, and in the second place, I gave you fair warnin' to keep 'im out."

"You hear that, Mr. Officer?" cried the sheep man. "He admits making threats against the deceased; he——"

"Just a moment, just a moment, Mr. Swope," interposed the deputy sheriff pacifically. "Did you have any words with this Juan Alvarez, Mr. Creede, when you saw him in the cañon? Any trouble of any kind?"

"No, we didn't have what you might call trouble—that is, nothin' serious."

"Well, just what words passed between you? This gentleman here is the coroner—we've got the body down at the ranch house, and we may want to suppeenie you for the inquest."

"Glad to meet you, sir," said Creede politely. "Well, all they was to it was this. When I rode in there and see that dam' Mexican standin' up on a ledge with his eyes bulgin' out, I says: 'What in hell—*I* didn't know you was here!' And he says: 'Oh, that's all right.'"

"Jest listen to the sun of a gun lie!"

yelled Jim Swope, beside himself with rage. "*Listen* to him! He said that was all right, did he? Three thousand head of sheep stompeded——"

"Yes," roared Creede, "he said: 'That's all right.' And what's more, there was another Mexican there that heard him! Now how about it, officer; how much have I got to take off of this dam' sheep puller before I git the right to talk back? Is he the judge and jury in this matter, or is he just a plain buttinsky?"

"I'll have to ask you gentlemen to key down a little," replied the deputy noncommittally, "and let's get through with this as soon as possible. Now, Mr. Creede—you seem to be willing to talk about this matter—I understand that there was some shots fired at the time you speak of?"

"Sure thing," replied Creede. "Juan took a couple of shots at me as I was goin' down the cañon. He looked so dam' funny, sittin' up on that ledge like a monkey-faced owl, that I couldn't help laughin', and, of course, it riled him some. But that's all right—I wouldn't hold it up against a dead man."

The deputy sheriff laughed in spite of himself, and the coroner chuckled, too. The death of a Mexican sheep herder was not a very sombre matter to gentlemen of their profession.

"I suppose you were armed?" inquired the corner casually.

"I had my six-shooter in my chaps, all right."

"Ah, is that the gun? What calibre is it?"

"A forty-five."

The officers of the law glanced at each other knowingly, and the deputy turned back toward the ranch.

"The deceased was shot with a thirty-thirty," observed the coroner briefly, and there the matter was dropped.

"Umm, a thirty-thirty," muttered Creede, "now who in——" He paused and nodded his head, and a look of infinite cunning came into his face as he glanced over his shoulder at the retreating posse.

"Bill Johnson!" he said, and then he laughed—but it was not a pleasant laugh.

They buried the boss herder under a pile of rocks on Lookout Point, and planted a cross above him, not for its Christian significance, nor yet because Juan was a good Catholic, but for the Mexicans to look at in the spring, when the sheep should come to cross. Jim Swope attended to this himself, after the coroner had given over the body, and for a parting word he cursed Jeff Creede.

Then for a day the world took notice of their struggle—the great outside world that had left them to fight it out. Three thousand head of sheep had been killed; mutton enough to feed a great city for a day had been destroyed—and all in a quarrel over public land. The word crept back to Washington, stripped to the bare facts—three thousand sheep and their herder killed by cattlemen on the proposed Salagua Reserve—and once more the question rose, why was not that Salagua Reserve proclaimed? No one answered. There was another sheep and cattle war going on up in Wyoming, and the same question was being asked about other proposed reserves. But when Congress convened in December the facts began to sift out—there was a combination of railroad and lumber interests, big cattlemen, sheep men and "land-grabbers" that was "against any interference on the part of the Federal Government," and "opposed to any change of existing laws and customs as to the grazing of live stock upon the public domain."

This anomalous organization was fighting, and for years had been fighting, the policy of the administration to create forest reserves and protect the public land; and, by alliances with other anti-administration forces in the East, had the President and his forester at their mercy. There would be no forestry legislation that winter—so the newspapers said. But that made no difference to the Four Peaks country.

Only the faint echoes of the battle at Washington reached the cow men's ears, and they no longer gave them any heed. For years they had been tolled

along by false hopes; they had talked eagerly of Forest Rangers to draw two-mile circles around their poor ranches and protect them from the sheep; they had longed to lease the range; to pay grazing fees; anything for protection—but now they had struck the first blow for themselves, and behold, on the instant the sheep went round, the grass crept back onto the scarred mesa, their cattle grew fat on the range.

Juan Alvarez, to be sure, was dead; but their hands were clean, let the sheep men say what they would. What were a few sheep carcasses up on the high mesa—they only matched the cattle that had died off during the drouth—and when they met a sheep herder now he gave them the trail.

Tucked away in a far corner of the Territory, without money, friends, or influence, there was nothing for it but to fight. All nature seemed conspiring to encourage them in their adventure—the winter came on early, with heavy rains; the grass took root again among the barren rocks, and when, in a belated rodeo, they gathered their beef steers, they received the highest selling price in years.

Suddenly the despised cow men of the Four Peaks saw before them the great vision which always hangs at the end of the rainbow in Arizona—a pot of gold, *if the sheep went around.* And what would make the sheep go around? Nothing but a thirty-thirty.

The price of mutton had gone up, too, adding a third to the fortune of every sheep man; the ewes were lambing on the desert, bringing forth a hundred per cent. or better, with twins—and every lamb must eat! To the hundred thousand sheep that had invaded Broncho Mesa there was added fifty thousand more, and they must all eat.

It was this that the sheep men had foreseen when they sent Juan Alvarez around to raid the upper range—not that they needed the feed then, but they would need it in the spring, and need it bad. So they had tried to break the way, and, failing, had sworn to come in arms—it was a fight for the grass, nothing less, and there was no law to stop it.

As the news of the trouble filtered out and crept into obscure corners of the daily press, Hardy received a long hortatory letter from Judge Ware; and, before he could answer it, another. To these he answered briefly that the situation could only be relieved by some form of Federal control; that, personally, his sympathies were with the cattlemen, but in case the judge was dissatisfied with his services——

But Judge Ware had learned wisdom from a past experience, and at this point he turned the correspondence over to Lucy. Then in a sudden fit of exasperation he packed his grip and hastened across the continent to Washington, to ascertain why the Salagua Forest Reserve was not proclaimed.

As for Lucy, her letters were as carefully considered as ever—she wrote of everything except the sheep and Kitty Bonnair. Not since she went away had she mentioned Kitty, nor had Hardy ever inquired about her. In idle moments he sometimes wondered what had been in that unread letter which he had burned with Creede's, but he never wrote in answer.

As the Rio Salagua, swollen with winter rains, rose up like a writhing yellow serpent and cast itself athwart the land, it drew a line from east to west, which neither sheep nor cattle could cross, and the cow men who had lingered about Hidden Water rode gayly back to their distant ranches, leaving the peaceful Dos S where Sallie Winship had hung her cherished lace curtains and Kitty and Lucy Ware had made a home almost a total wreck.

Sheep, drouth, and flood had passed over it in a six months; the pasture fence was down, the corrals were half dismantled, and the bunk room looked like a deserted grading camp.

For a week Creede and Hardy cleaned up and rebuilt, but every day, in spite of his partner's efforts to divert his mind, Jeff grew more restless and uneasy. Then one lonely evening he went over to the corner where his money was buried and began to dig.

"What—the—hell—is the matter with this place?" he exclaimed, looking up from his work as if he expected the roof to drop. "Ever since Tommy died it gits on my nerves, bad." He rooted out his tomato can and stuffed a roll of bills carelessly into his overalls pocket. "Got any mail to go out?" he inquired, coming back to the fire, and Hardy understood without more words that Jeff was going on another drunk.

"Why, yes," he said, "I might write a letter to the boss. But how're you going to get across the river?—she's running high now."

"Oh, I'll git across the river, all right," grumbled Creede. "Born to be hung, and ye can't git drowned, as they say. Well, give the boss my best." He paused, frowning gloomily into the fire. "Say," he said, his voice breaking a little, "d'ye ever hear from Miss Bonnair?"

For a moment Hardy was silent. Then, reading what was in his partner's heart, he answered gently:

"Not a word, Jeff."

The big cowboy sighed and grinned cynically.

"That was a mighty bad case I had," he observed philosophically. "But d'ye know what was the matter with me? Well, I never tumbled to it till afterward. It was jest because she was like Sallie—talked like her and rode like her, straddle, that way. But I wanter tell you, boy," he added mournfully, "Sal had my heart."

He sank once more into sombre contemplation, grumbling as he nursed his wounds, and at last Hardy asked him a leading question about Sallie Winship.

"Did I ever hear from 'er?" repeated Creede, rousing up from his reverie. "No, and it ain't no use to try. I wrote to her three times, but I never got no answer—I reckon the old lady held 'em out on her. She wouldn't stand for no bow-legged cowpuncher—and ye can't blame her none, the way old man Winship used to make her cook for them rodeo hands—but Sallie would've answered them letters if she'd got 'em."

"But where were they living in St. Louis?" persisted Hardy. "Maybe you got the wrong address?"

"Nope, I got it straight—Saint Louis, Mo., jest the way you see it in these money-order catalogues."

"But didn't you give any street and number?" cried Hardy, aghast. "Why for Heaven's sake, Jeff, there are half a million people in St. Louis—she'd never get it in the world."

"No?" inquired Creede apathetically. "Well, it don't make no difference, then. I don't amount to a dam,' anyhow—and this is no place for a woman—but, by golly, Rufe, I do git awful lonely when I see you writin' them letters to the boss. If I only had somebody that cared for me I'd prize up hell to make good—I'd do anything in God's world—turn back them sheep or give up my six-shooter, jest as she said—but nope, they's no such luck for Jeff Creede—he couldn't make a-winnin' with a squaw."

"Jeff," said Hardy quietly, "how much would you give to get a letter from Sallie?"

"What d'ye mean?" demanded Creede, looking up quickly. Then, seeing the twinkle in his partner's eye, he made a grab for his money. "My whole wad," he cried, throwing down the roll. "What's the deal?"

"All right," answered Hardy, deliberately counting out the bills, "there's the ante—a hundred dollars. The rest I hold back for that trip to St. Louis. This hundred goes to a detective agency, along with a real nice letter that I'll help you write; and the minute they deliver that letter into the hands of Miss Sallie Winship, formerly of Hidden Water, Arizona, and return an answer, there's another hundred coming to 'em. Is it a go?"

"Pardner," said Creede, rising up solemnly from his place. "I want to shake with you on that."

The next morning, with a package of letters in the crown of his black hat, Jefferson Creede swam Bat Wings across the swift current of the Salagua, hanging onto his tail from behind, and without even stopping to pour the water out of his boots, struck into the long trail for Bender.

One week passed, and then another,

and at last he came back, wet and dripping from his tussle with the river, and cursing the very name of detectives.

"W'y, shucks!" he grumbled. "I bummed around in town there for two weeks, hatin' myself and makin' faces at a passel of ornery sheep men, and what do I git for my trouble? 'Dear Mister Creede—your letter of umpty-ump received—we have detailed Detective Moriarty on this case, and will report later. Yours truly!' That's all—keep the change—we make a livin' off of suckers—and they's one born every minute.

"Say," he said, changing the subject abruptly, "how many hundred thousand sheep d'ye think I saw, comin' up from Bender? Well, sir, they was sheep as far as the eye could see—millions of 'em—and they've got that plain et down to the original sand and cactus, already. W'y, boy, if we let them sheep men in on us this spring we'll look like a watermelon patch after a nigger picnic—we'll be cleaned like Pablo Moreno—they won't be pickin's for a billy goat! And Jim 'nd Jasp have been ribbin' their herders on scandalous.

"Well, I'm goin' to call the rodeo right away and work that whole upper range, and when the river goes down you'll find Jeff Creede right there with the goods if Jasp is lookin' for trouble. Read them letters, boy, and tell me if I'm goin' to have the old judge on my hands."

According to the letters, he was; and the "boss" was also looking forward with pleasure to her visit in the spring.

"Well, wouldn't that jar you?" commented Creede, and then he laughed slyly. "Cheer up," he said, "it might be worse—they's nothin' said about Kitty Bonnair."

Sure enough—not a word about Kitty! And the year before Lucy had spoken about her in every letter! There was something mysterious and sinister about it.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The final installment of this serial will be published ***two weeks hence,*** *in the* ***first May issue, on sale Friday, April 8th.***

FULL OF "GO"

AN acquaintance of a merchant who is engaged in a large way of business recently recommended an attractive young man who at the time was looking for a clerkship.

Not long after the merchant met his friend, and was asked by him if the selection of the young man in question had not proved a thoroughly wise one.

"Wise?" exclaimed the merchant. "Why, man, haven't you heard what has just happened?"

"I'm terribly sorry if he has turned out badly," said the other. "It was my firm belief that he would have suited you through and through—he was so full of go."

"Full of go," was the response. "I should think he was—far too full of go for me. Why, he's clean gone, and there's a thousand dollars gone, too."

"Never," cried the man who had recommended the bright young clerk. "Really, I thought he was just the fellow you were looking for."

"So he is," declared the merchant emphatically. "So he is. I'm looking for him now."

The Marriage of Perikles Jones

By Robert Rudd Whiting

Author of "The King's Club," Etc.

"A. P. N. B." Do you know what these mystic letters stand for? Mr. Whiting tells a very amusing story about the formation of an association which was known by these four letters. It's one of the most remarkable associations that you ever heard of.

IT was at the free-lunch counter in George's place that the Association for the Protection of Natural Blondes had its inception. Perikles Jones had been advance agent for a burlesque company until his show started going the other way, when he found himself rear guard in the disorganized scramble back to the big city. D'Arcy Sinjohn had been an artist whose work was over the heads of the masses. Yes, a barber. They were trying to evolve some scheme whereby a capital of thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents could be made to bring them wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

"I have it!" suddenly exclaimed Perikles, his voice joyously crowding its way through a mouthful of potato salad. "You know that druggist friend of yours over on Eighth Avenue that you were telling me about? Well, say, do you think you could get him to put up peroxide with your own label on the bottles? Wholesale rates, cash in thirty days? We could guarantee him at least three gross a week after the thing gets going good, and if——"

"What in the name of Delilah, mother of barbers!" gasped D'Arcy Sinjohn.

"Calm yourself, Sinjy," urged Perikles. "Have a couple of drinks brought into the back room and listen to me."

And there in the dingy back room of George's place—the priceless pearl from the humble oyster grows—Perikles Jones unfolded his glittering plan for the Association for the Protection of Natural Blondes. As later in this story, he goes all over it again in more attractive surroundings the reader will not be asked to listen to it now.

"D'ye savvy?" asked Perikles, as he concluded his wonderful scheme. Mr. Sinjohn sat open mouthed with admiration and delight.

"Well, then, now to get down to business," continued Perikles. "This is Thursday, ain't it? You go 'round and make arrangements with your druggist friend for his peroxide this afternoon. And see the printer about the labels—'Aphrodite's Hair Ambrosia.' 'Hebe's Hair Lotion'—anything so long as it's noncommittal and doesn't mention 'bleach' or 'dye' on it. I'll look around for rooms for the association and hire a place for you somewhere in the same neighborhood. Then I'll get the ad. into the Sunday paper. Sunday's best. There's never much going on in the news line on Sunday, and every city editor in town will be sure to send up on it. And then on Monday—on Monday!" He whistled a few bars of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Sunday morning Perikles Jones was seated at a battered walnut table in the front parlor of a dilapidated old "brownstone front." The ceiling was much more pretentiously furnished than the floor. The tarnished gilt chandelier, with its jangling crystals, formed the central point of the mural design of fat

cupids daintily bearing pink festoons through the cottony clouds. The floor was carpetless, and the chair in which Perikles sat was the best of three.

Perikles glanced at the advertisement in the paper on his desk:

> Wanted: Natural blondes who believe in protection. Apply A. for P. of N. B., 191 West 19th Street.

Perikles sighed. An advertisement of that sort certainly ought to attract attention, but as yet, only two had called in answer to it. The first, whom he had found waiting in the hall when he came, was a careworn, drawn-looking woman, who could have passed for almost any age. Her blondeness seemed to have come from fading, as though she were not fast colors. Perikles dismissed her gently.

The second applicant *was* fast colors. She was a natural blonde only in the sense that it seemed perfectly natural that she should have bleached her hair. What he wanted, Perikles politely explained, was a woman with perfectly natural blonde hair.

Since this one's departure he had waited and waited. He anxiously consulted his watch. Eleven o'clock. The newspaper offices had opened. The reporters might be upon him any minute now. He started another sigh. A timid knocking at the door cut it short.

"Come in!"

The door opened gently and a beam of warm, golden sunshine brightened the room. Perikles was on his feet in an instant, offering his chair, and for himself drawing up the second best of the three.

The sunbeam acknowledged his courtesy with a dazzling smile. She was of the strictly placid rather than of the turbulent type of blonde. She had the figure of an hourglass—an hourglass with a waist so small that the sands of time must have difficulty in recording the passing years. She had golden hair and the innocent china blue eyes of a beautiful doll—eyes that looked as though they automatically closed each night when she lay down and automatically opened again each morning. When her cherry-red lips parted to speak, Perikles half expected to hear them mechanically pronounce, "Pa-pa. Ma-ma. Pa-pa. Ma-ma."

"Your advertisement caught my eye——" she began.

"Fortunate advertisement," sighed Perikles. Aloud: "Yes, madam, yes. In the first place, my name is Jones—Perikles Jones. You doubtless wonder——"

Another knock at the door. This time it opened briskly.

"Is this the A. for P. to N. B.? I came to see about this advertisement for blondes needing protection," announced a dark young man, glancing up from the clipping in his hand to the sun-topped vision at Perikles' side. "I represent the *Daily Planet* and——"

"Oh, a gentleman of the press," lisped the lady a little doubtfully. "If you will talk to our Mr. Jones here—our Mr. Perikles Jones—he has charge of all that part of—er—he will doubtless be able to tell you everything you wish to know."

Mr. Jones shot a glance of admiring approval at the lady and cleared his throat.

"The Association for the Protection of Natural Blondes does not court publicity," began Perikles professionally. "Still, since the daily prints seem to have interested themselves in our work—what is it you wish to know, sir?"

"Association for the Prevention—er—Protection of Natural Blondes," repeated the reporter, jotting down the name on the back of an envelope. "You must excuse my ignorance, Mr. Jones, but just what is this association for?"

"The name explains itself," said Perikles easily. "This is an association of natural blondes, Heaven's most splendid gift to man, who have banded together to protect themselves from the ridicule and abuse which in these undiscriminating days is unjustly heaped upon them.

"Why, consider the part your own profession plays in this outrage," said Perikles, pointing an accusing finger at the interviewer. "Pick up a morning newspaper and scan the headlines.

What do you find? 'Broker's Wife Horsewhips Blonde Woman in Theatre Lobby;' 'Kills Wife and Nine Children—Blonde Woman Cause of It All;' 'Rich Banker Missing—Last Seen With Mysterious Blonde.' I ask you, sir, as man to man, suppose that the woman in any of these cases had had brown hair, do you think that that fact would have been mentioned? Most decidedly not.

"But no matter what the nature or extent of a crime, if there is a blonde woman anywhere within shouting distance, people immediately assume that she is at the bottom of it. *Cherchez la blonde!*

"It isn't fair. Blondes are the most beautiful"—Perikles glanced furtively at the lady—"the most amiable, the most——"

A knock at the door gave the lady a chance to cover her embarrassment. Two more reporters introduced themselves. After preliminary explanations, Perikles resumed:

"All beautiful women have been blondes. Venus, herself—'the gold-haired goddess,' as the poet hath it. And consider the blonde's amiability and sweetness of disposition. Why, when the Romans went up into Britain they called the people they found there angels, just because they had fair hair and blue eyes. No other proofs were needed to convince them. Angels—from which we derive the name Angel in Anglo-Saxon. And those old-time Romans knew what was what, gentlemen; even if they did have dark hair themselves.

"Did you ever hear of a beautiful fairy queen that didn't have blue eyes and golden hair?" demanded Perikles, warming up to his subject. "Of course not. I don't believe there ever was such a thing as a brunette fairy.

"The early poets and novelists knew how to appreciate the Heaven-given blonde. Who ever read of a brunette heroine in the olden days, before this invidious conspiracy was formed? Why, in those good old romances, a brunette wasn't considered even decent. It was always some dark-eyed, black-haired woman who went sneaking around slandering the beautiful golden-haired maiden whom the hero was about to make his own. Merely fiction? Yes, gentlemen, but good fiction is the mirror of all ages.

"Why, romances that otherwise would have ended happily in little more than a chapter were sometimes strung out to three and four volumes through the machinations of some designing brunette.

"But now, in the present day, what have we? Blondes are called false and inconstant; cheap comedians spring jokes about their being so light headed; when the injured wife in the comic weeklies finds a hair on her husband's coat it is invariably a blonde hair. When—but I could go on forever.

"How do we account for this cruel conspiracy to which you gentlemen of the press have unwittingly lent your support? Jealousy. Jealousy and envy on the part of scheming brunettes. Their jealousy leads them to slander their fair-haired sister, whose very amiability and lack of suspicion makes her easy prey. And 'tis envy of the blonde's golden radiance that tempts the dark women to bleach their hair. But while they can bleach their hair, they cannot bleach their hearts, and their dark deeds bring discredit upon the more favored of their sex whom nature has crowned with gold."

"What does your association intend to do about all this?" asked one of the reporters. "How do you propose to combat the—er—false impression created by these wily brunettes?"

"Publicity," answered Mr. Jones. "Upon every libel involving an innocent blonde we will turn the full light of publicity. If it turns out that the woman in question has dark hair we will demand retraction. If she proves to be a brunette with bleached hair we will compel the newspapers to so state. It is for such purposes that I have been retained. The blonde's shrinking modesty and innate horror of scandal unfit her for her own defense. I have been engaged by the association to take charge of their publicity department.

"Later we may make a test case to see if the law against obtaining goods under false pretenses does not apply to the bleaching of hair, but I am not sure that it would be wise for me to go into that matter with you at this time. We wish to do nothing that might in any way serve to put the brunettes upon their guard."

A few more questions convinced the reporters that the interview was at an end. When they had gone, Perikles turned to the lady.

"How perfeckly lovely!" she gushed. "But——"

"You have heard what it's all about," Perikles told her. "Now what we want is some one to act as secretary of this organization. Some one who is generously endowed with beauty, and blondness, and brains, and—er"—he searched her face for further requisites—"and blue eyes, and——"

"Why, *Mister* Jones!"

"Such a woman could practically name her own salary. The duties are simple and pleasant. Merely to act as secretary and take down the names and addresses of all the women who apply here for membership, so that we will be able to notify them when the association is ready to take its first step. There will be no initiation fees or dues to look after. We must do nothing that would tend to keep down the membership. We have a better scheme for raising revenue."

Perikles drew his chair confidentially close to hers.

"Naturally, I couldn't say anything about this to the reporters, Miss—er——"

"Simpson," she lisped. "Miss Lorelei Simpson."

"Miss Simpson"—low bow. "Among the applicants for membership, Miss Simpson, there will undoubtedly be many bleached brunettes who will seize this opportunity for further carrying out their perfidious deception. Do not let them know that their hair is suspected. Welcome them as you do the others, merely remembering to casually inject some such remark as, 'It's high time we poor blondes did do something, now that that horrid old professor around at one eighty-seven West Seventeenth Street is making a hair bleach that actually can't be detected.'

"One hundred and eighty-seven is D'Arcy Sinjohn's address," Perikles explained in answer to the round mystification of her china blue eyes. "He's one of us. He'll be around here before long, and I want you to meet him. He's going to keep a descriptive list of all the women who come to him to buy hair bleach, so that by comparing notes each day we can weed out the black sheep from the golden fleece. That's where we'll get the money to run the game. The more black sheep who buy hair bleach, the greater the profits with which to carry on the fight against them. We make them finance their own extermination."

"Oh, how perfeckly lovely!"

Seldom in all his varied career, thought Perikles Jones, had he found such an intelligent listener. It was with something almost bordering upon resentment that he viewed the arrival of D'Arcy Sinjohn an hour or so later.

Monday morning's papers gave the A. P. N. B. publicity beyond Perikles' fondest hopes. Under the heading "Blondes Versus Converted Brunettes," the *Moon* gave it almost a column. "Campaign Against Gold-Plated Hair," and "'All That Glitters Is Not Gold,' Say Blondes," in the *Mercury* and the *Planet,* respectively, occupied a half column each. The other papers were not far behind.

Miss Simpson, installed at the A. P. N. B. desk with Perikles close at hand in case his advice was needed, awaited the onslaught of justice-seeking blondes It was not long in coming. The first was a demure little woman with portion upon portion of scrambled egg hair.

"Ready-made," was Perikles' mental classification.

Miss Simpson gave an alluring synopsis of the worthy objects of the association and graciously entered Pearline Leary for membership. Scarcely was her name dry than a cloud of per-

fumery, closely preceding a group of glittering, giggling, gold-tipped show girls, gushed into the room.

Perikles scanned their hair with professional eye for signs of darkness at the roots, but could not be certain until he heard Miss Simpson: "And really, you know, it was bad enough when they only had peroxide, but now that this horrid old Professor Whatever-his-name-is has discovered a really and truly nondetectable bleach—— Well, it's high time we did do something for our own protection!"

"How perfectly dreadful! Can't we have him arrested or something?" wondered one of the gold-mounted applicants. "What did you say his name was?"

"Why—er—you know—there's been a lot about him in the papers lately," said Miss Simpson, with an I-know-it-just-as-well sort of an expression. "Oh, pshaw—he has his laboratories around here at one hundred and eighty-seven West Seventeenth Street."

Perikles had to scowl to keep from openly expressing his admiration for Miss Simpson.

So it went all day. Tall blondes, small blondes, wild blondes, mild blondes, bold blondes, gold blondes, dim blondes, slim blondes, sincere blondes, near blondes—blondes, blondes, blondes, blondes—until Perikles Jones yearned for a pair of smoked glasses to rest his eyes.

Some of them were ready-made blondes, but more of them were made-to-order blondes, and that evening when Perikles and Miss Simpson went around to Professor D'Arcy Sinjohn's laboratories they found him limp from taking in money.

"Well, Sinjy, how fares it with the alchemist?" asked Perikles facetiously. "Been busy transforming black dross into threads of gold?"

Miss Simpson giggled appreciatively.

Comparison of her descriptive list with that kept by D'Arcy showed that out of one hundred and thirty-seven doubtfuls who had applied for membership in the A. P. N. B., eighty-nine had purchased Professor Sinjohn's leavening hair wash.

"Making in all, exactly eighty-seven dollars," announced the professor, smacking his lips with satisfaction.

"Eighty-seven dollars!" gasped Perikles Jones.

"How perfeckly lovely!" gurgled Lorelei Simpson.

Sinjohn counted out five dollars for each of them—"advance on salary" for Miss Simpson; "daily current expenses" for Perikles and himself.

It was arranged that he should deposit the balance in the bank each morning, so that he could pay their bills by check. It would make their credit better. At the end of each week they would divide the profits.

The A. P. N. B's second day showed some falling off in the number of applications for membership, but Perikles did not mind that; he welcomed the opportunity it gave him for feasting his eyes upon the radiant divinity at his side. And such intellect! Not that she ever gave any outward expression to it. That is where she showed it. The woman a man considers brainy is the woman who listens to him, dumb with awe and admiration. The woman who ventures opinions of her own is immediately relegated by man to the "oh-what's-the-use-of-arguing-with-a-woman" class.

Although fewer blondes fluttered about the association's standards, D'Arcy Sinjohn had no falling off in receipts to report to Perikles and Miss Simpson that evening. They accounted for this on the theory that their first customers had told their friends.

"And those friends will tell other friends," said D'Arcy optimistically. "Say, Perry," gazing thoughtfully at Miss Simpson's crowning beauty, "don't you think your coming round here with Miss Simpson every night is sorter risky? Supposing some of them reporters should spot you? If they ever doped out any connection between this peroxide plant and your protective parlors it would be all off with the A. P. N. B., all right, all right."

"How stupid of me not to have

thought!" agreed Miss Simpson immediately. "And you've been risking all this just for my sake, Mr. Jones! Why, of course, I can come here alone. It's perfectly safe. Besides, it's right on my way home. And I can bring a copy of the accounts to you at the protective parlors every morning."

Perikles felt vague objections to this plan, but was bound to admit that there was risk in the present arrangement. With considerable misgiving he finally gave in.

It was her blonde trustfulness that worried him, he afterward decided. Of course, it was perfectly proper for her to go over the accounts with Sinjohn each evening. Sinjy was all right. But there were others who were not. Innocence and guilelessness are *not* their own protection in a great and wicked city.

"Yes," thought Perikles at the A. P. N. B., two days later, as he gazed at her china blue eyes, and listened to her sweet, childlike voice. "She needs some one to protect her. Some one big and strong and masterful; some one who" —he had a sudden inspiration. The very first moment that they were alone he acted upon it.

"Miss Simpson," he began fervently. "Laura—Laurel——"

"Lorelei," she innocently helped out.

"Lorelei, if I may make so bold as to call you such, you need a protector; some strong hand to guide you midst the rush and bustle of this complex whirl of life; some one"—he dropped to his knee and took her hand in his.

"Why, *Mister* Jones!"

"I realize that we have known each other only a few days, but to me, dear lady, those few days have seemed ages —ages that in *your* sweet presence," he hastily explained, "have passed like fleeting seconds. Say but the word, that I may protect and cherish you always. As for worldly goods, you know my resources as well as I. Half of the income from the hair bleach business is mine. How could I better use this income in the interests of *all* fair-haired women than by bestowing it upon you, their sun-kissed queen? What's mine is yours, to do with as you will. Whatever——"

"Why, *Mister Jones!* Really—I don't know how——"

"Don't give me your answer now, little woman. Take time to think. Sleep on it well, and——"

He was interrupted by the intrusion of a tall, angular woman with freckled face, pale green eyes, and sandy hair, who came to apply for membership.

The following morning Perikles was at the A. P. N. B. ahead of time. For a while he sat and drummed upon the desk with his fingers.

The postman whistled. The frowsy housemaid brought a letter. Perikles took it languidly. Suddenly he started. What! *Her* writing! With heart a-flutter he tore open the envelope. His brow clouded. The letter itself was in a masculine hand. Perikles was clearly brunettled. He turned to the signature. "D'Arcy Sinjohn!" Eagerly, fearfully, he scanned the written pages:

DEAR PERRY: Your congratulations, old man, Lorelie and I were married in Hokoben last night. By the time this reaches you we will be on our way to the glorious Golden West. Doubtless this may seem rather sudden, but I have been carefully contemplating the step for the last two days. I finally concluded that while in money matters it may be more honorable to *make* gold than to marry it, in hair goods it is nobler to *marry* gold than it would be to go on making it.

The rent of the rooms is paid for a week. Use them as you see best. I would have left your share of the profits for you, but Lorelei says that you assured her that whatever was yours was hers. Now that we are one, whatever is hers, of course, is mine. Blonde-like (bless her!) she did not think that this seemed quite fair, until I reminded her that in love everything is fair—particularly blondes.

"Blondes!" hissed Perikles Jones, savagely crumpling the letter and flinging it from him. Jamming his hat onto his head he strode out of the room, through the hall, down the steps, far, far away.

And that is how Perikles Jones came to marry a Coney Island Salome dancer with piercing black eyes and hair the color of an ink spot in the inside pocket of the mantle of darkness.

Greater Love

By W. Lacey Amy

The turning point in the life of Blue Pete, a half-breed mounted police detective. He put his destiny in the hands of a judge; and the pity was that his Honor was too small a man to recognize the greatness of his opportunity

WHEN it came to a matter of brands, Blue Pete, the half-breed mounted police detective, was in a class by himself. He never told all he knew about them. Indeed, it was doubtful if he could have explained how he arrived at conclusions that were unerring. It was one of his stock exhibitions before cattlemen, to examine a brand and tell to within a few months when it had been made, the condition of the iron at the time, and the skill of the brander.

Blue Pete could have joined the outfit of any rancher in the Medicine Hat district, and drawn higher pay than the police gave him. He could have made his fortune in rustling, with his knowledge of brand manipulation. But he preferred casual employment with liberty to leave at a moment's notice, and secret pay from the mounted police. Money was of very little use to him, but the excitement of man hunting and horse tracking came up to his idea of a perfect existence.

Although for more than a year he had been able to conceal his connection with the mounted police, the inquest into the death of two rustlers whom he had been forced to shoot, had made his position public. Thereafter the ranchers found little use for him, the inconvenience of performing the spring round-up and branding under the keen eyes of a police official, overbalancing his ability to assist in the work.

Their resentment and their fear of what Blue Pete might know were all the greater from the fact that for all these months they had been treating him as one of themselves.

Inspector Parker, therefore, sent word to the Lodge detachment, from which headquarters Blue Pete usually worked, to keep the half-breed engaged in regular rides around and into the Cypress Hills, a large tract of wildly wooded hills, a hundred miles long and ten wide, whose devious paths and passages he knew as none other in the country. Several times the half-breed was shot at from ambush, but his recklessness seemed to save him, and, when he had brought in two cowboys from across the border and had convicted them of attempted manslaughter, these attacks ceased.

To tourists, his presence at the barracks in the city was a source of entertainment. His revolver shooting was little short of marvelous.

His favorite amusement was a startlingly dangerous one. He would place the muzzle of his six-shooter in his mouth, his squint eyes wandering twinklingly over the visitors, and almost as fast as he could work the trigger, would revolve the cylinder as long as you wanted to look at him. A hair's breadth farther and the cartridge would explode, but just at that point between the revolving of the cylinder and the explosion, his finger would stop.

When the weak-nerved spectators were closing their eyes in fear, the revolver would ring out, and the ensuing

screams invariably brought a burst of laughter from the half-breed as the bullet whizzed harmlessly past his ear.

Blue Pete's best friend—in fact, the only one he seemed really to care about,—was Corporal Mahon, a young Englishman, who had worked with him on many of his most difficult cases. The two men were the best of comrades, the young policeman reading his weekly letters from his mother in England to the half-breed, the latter listening reverently, and taking care that the son never neglected to send the weekly answer.

On their long rides, or when curled up behind a sagebush on the prairie, Mahon would read and reread the last letter, Blue Pete listening with an intensity of interest that would have surprised any one who knew the dusky-skinned half-breed only as a daring, illiterate cowboy detective.

On Friday of each week—the day when the little buckboard drove up to the detachment door with the few letters, papers, and parcels for the half dozen policemen stationed there—Blue Pete usually contrived to do Mahon's work as well as his own, in order to allow the young man to be on hand when his mother's letter arrived. And then as soon as his duties were over the half-breed would seek him out, as if accidentally, and hear the latest tokens of a fond mother's fears and forebodings, her love and hopes.

Once the half-breed begged for one of the old letters to carry. Mahon handed it to him wonderingly. Blue Pete felt an explanation necessary, and in a sheepish tone, he stammered: "Kind uh think I'd like t' have a letter on me always. Ain't never had no mother m'self."

A few weeks later, he had returned the letter minus the heading, "My dear boy," which the young policeman noticed without a word. All the home letters began with "my dear boy," and the half-breed had taken to calling him "Boy" when they were alone.

When work was not pressing, or when riding in the Hills, Blue Pete often took the corporal to a cave which he had fitted up with pine needles for beds, two stalls for the horses, a makeshift stove, and what was an apparently inexhaustible supply of canned goods. The police detective's work sometimes took him away for weeks, and only Mahon knew that he made this cave his headquarters.

One day in late summer a rancher reported to the police the loss of a roan mare. He had purchased it from a dealer out near Irvine, and, missing it later, made inquiries. A cowboy said he had seen it in a bunch being driven south by a young cowboy working for the rancher who originally owned the mare.

The mounted police had long had their eyes on a rancher named Peterson, and seized this evidence gladly. Blue Pete received his instructions, and three weeks later rode into the barracks corral with a roan mare dragging behind, and a glum-looking cowboy riding in front. He had completed a bundle of evidence that meant sure incarceration for Peterson.

Unfortunately, however, the glowering individual, who snarled out a curse when ordered to dismount, had been brought over the border by the half-breed at the point of a revolver.

The police were willing to take chances on the horse forcibly taken, but the man was a different matter. He was reluctantly allowed to go, and it became evident that conviction must come from other quarters. The receiver of stolen horses would not appear willingly at the trial.

The evidence rounded up was sufficiently complete to convince any fair-minded judge. The young cowboy who had driven the bunch south was in the hands of the police, but he was only fourteen years old, and a good criminal lawyer like that employed by Peterson might tangle him so that his evidence would be of little use.

But the principal difficulty lay in the fact that a new judge was to sit. Judge Ritchie had been lawyer and insurance and real-estate agent. He had qualified for his position by some political work that betrayed a conscience not

over-sensitive. As a criminal lawyer before his elevation he had often run foul of the police and bore them no good will.

The cowboy who had seen the roan mare in the bunch gave his evidence, and the purchase of the mare was also sufficiently proven. Blue Pete was put on the stand to identify the stolen mare. It was purely a matter of brands, and there the half-breed was at home.

"Your name?" asked the clerk.

"Pete."

"But your whole name?"

The half-breed hesitated a moment. "Blue Pete," he answered.

"Here now!" interrupted the judge with all the dignity of a new official. "We want your full name—your surname."

Blue Pete looked helplessly around at Inspector Parker. "Pete Maverick," he answered.

A titter ran through the courtroom, and Blue Pete's face wrinkled.

"Order! Order!" shouted the sheriff. The lawyers—everybody but the self-important judge—had smiled.

The crown prosecutor immediately plunged Blue Pete into a maze of detail on brands and brand detection. The half-breed told of the colors of brands put on at different times, of the state of the scar and the skin, the length of hair over it, the way the skin would wrinkle, the various stamps of different branders and irons, and the varieties of brands made by irons at different heats.

The judge looked very learned, though he had no more knowledge of what was being explained than he had of Blue Pete's surname.

The half-breed told when the original brand on the roan mare had been made, when the vent had been put on, and when the alteration was branded on to conceal the original brand. The police were delighted.

Then Paddy Nolan, the big criminal lawyer from Calgary, rose.

"How long have you been with the police?" he asked.

"'Bout three years."

"Where were you before that?"

The crown prosecutor objected, but the judge upheld Nolan.

"In th' States," came the answer.

"What were you doing there?"

Another objection refused consideration.

"Workin' on ranches."

"What was your work on the ranches?"

"Takin' care uh cattle." Another laugh in the courtroom.

"Now I want you to tell the court whether you were or were not rustling over there."

Blue Pete hesitated. "I was," he answered.

The criminal lawyer smiled and looked at the judge.

"How long were you rustling?"

Blue Pete sat down lazily on the edge of the witness box. "Ten years I rustled for th' biggest rustlers in th' Bad Lands."

"Who were you with?"

"Clark Brothers—Sidney an' Conn—Hughson—Nanton's—— Want t' know any more?"

"No, that will do. So that explains how you profess to know so much about brands! I suppose you did lots of brand switching yourself?"

Blue Pete grunted an affirmative.

"And I suppose you could change a horse by its brand and otherwise, so that its best friends would not know it. Tell us how you would do it apart from the brands."

The half-breed entered willingly into the discussion. He told of the carbolic-acid marks, the effects of ordinary scars in changing color, and even shape, of marking a horse's face, and changing the shape of its ears.

Then the judge stopped him.

"I do not think you need go farther," he said. "Besides, it would be an unwise thing to permit such criminal knowledge as you possess to be disseminated. This court cannot accept the evidence of a man who acknowledges that he has been a rustler for ten years. The police have no right to employ such a man. I cannot convict on such evidence."

Blue Pete's mouth opened in bewil-

derment for a moment. Then he stood straight up and looked at the judge. "Does yer honor mean I'm lyin'?" he asked.

"That'll do," the judge answered. Turning to the lawyer, he asked: "Is there anything you want to ask of this man?"

Blue Pete spoke. "Jedge, f'r ten years I rustled with th' biggest rustlers, not 'cause I wanted t' steal cattle, but 'cause every one 'round me rustled. Three years ago I came t' Canady, an' since then I've got hundreds uh horses an' cattle back t' their owners. I like th' work, an' there's this about it, jedge—just as long as I'm with th' police, I'm straight. Ain't got no reason for lyin' now. I guess mebbe I'm a little use t' th' country, but if yuh turn me down like that, jedge, I may's well go back t' rustlin'. Got to live 'mong th' cattle an' horses. Or'nary cowboyin's too tame fer me. D'yuh want me t' be a detective or a rustler? Yuh have it in yer hands, jedge."

"Next witness," said Judge Ritchie briefly.

Blue Pete strode silently out of the courtroom. Corporal Mahon laid a detaining hand on his arm. "Don't take it that way, Pete," he said sympathetically. "We believe you, and we know Judge Ritchie."

The half-breed walked on unheedingly, his lips working, and his hands clinched.

The next morning a boy brought into the barracks Pete's horse and saddle, his Stetson hat, and his shoes—everything he possessed that had been supplied by the mounted police. The inspector read the message, and roundly cursed the judge. He gave orders to his men to send Blue Pete to him as soon as they could find him.

But it was months before they found him—and then they brought him in reverently.

The week after the trial, rancher after rancher began to come in with reports of lost animals. The police scoured the prairie, but the rustlers knew Blue Pete was no longer on their track, and for weeks, until winter set in, the police had the hardest riding they had ever known. Then in the spring the inspector himself was forced to join the chase. It was evident that rustlers from across the line were laughing at the police and Canadian law. By tireless riding, several bunches of horses were captured and stiff sentences meted out to a few of the rustlers who were captured.

But still there was rustling that baffled the police. A constant patrol south of the Hills led to no discoveries, and for a time the N. W. M. P. were at a loss to know how the horses were slipped out of the country.

One day a rancher who had taken a lease of land away north on the Red Deer, came to town, and in conversation with the police, spoke of a couple of bunches of horses he had seen going north. At first the police were inclined to disbelieve him, for the north trail led through two hundred miles of unknown prairie where no man lived. Then beyond it was the line of towns and farm lands along the Canadian Northern.

One of the policemen suggested that the horses were driven north to go east or west by a roundabout way and then down into the States. The entire police force in the west was notified to be on the lookout, and the Medicine Hat patrol spread itself out to cover more territory. But nothing resulted.

Mahon, who was now a sergeant, reached one conclusion that later became a clue—instead of the horses disappearing in bunches, only the larger ones were selected. This seemed to be invariably the case, and the sergeant spent many days, as he wandered up and down the prairie, trying to make out what it meant.

Blue Pete had not been heard from since the day of the trial. The police had been constantly on the search for him, at first to assist them, and later it had been forced upon them that the half-breed had accepted the alternative which he put squarely up to the judge.

The inspector and Sergeant Mahon were reluctant to believe that Blue Pete had gone back to rustling. That he was in the district was attested by in-

formation collected from several cowboys who had seen him. Once or twice Mahon had even suspected that the capture of bands on the way across the border had been rendered easier by some third party who had placed clues with what looked like studied carelessness.

A raw young recruit who was lost in the Cypress Hills had been piloted on his way by a half-breed, whom they readily recognized from the description as Blue Pete, and once Mahon, himself, after four days of almost ceaseless riding, had found three cans of meat and a loaf of rough bread beside him when he arose famished from his grass couch on the morning of the fifth day.

He had never visited the cave which he knew had been Blue Pete's home in the Hills. Somehow he felt that he should not take advantage of the knowledge gained on those little trips of theirs. If any other member of the force discovered it, it would not be through any hint from him. If Blue Pete were rustling, he would have to be taken in the open, and in fair fight. Mahon would help in that, as was his duty. He knew, too, that Blue Pete would feel that the location of his cave would not be exposed by the man who had gained his knowledge through the kindness of the occupant.

Sergeant Mahon's biggest surprise came when a dirty piece of paper was found under the detachment door with the word "Boy" scrawled on the outside, and inside a rough drawing of a cowboy with a pointed revolver. Underneath was the word "Billsy." Mahon knew it was a warning from Blue Pete that "Billsy," a notorious Bad Land's rustler, would shoot him on sight. The sergeant had captured a bunch of cattle from Billsy only a short time before, and had almost taken the rustler with them. The surprise of the warning was that the half-breed was learning to write. The next month he received three notes from Blue Pete that showed advancement in his writing, and gave the police valuable clues on stolen animals.

Why the half-breed, who had scorned letters, was now passing through the intricacies of the alphabet and writing, Mahon could not guess. That it would not be so hard for the man who could read brands where other men could decipher nothing, he knew, but he also felt sure that the latest acquirement was for some definite purpose.

Another report of horses going north led to the dispatch of three mounted police away up to the Red Deer. As they worked north they came upon unmistakable signs that the reports were true. Old camp fires, trodden mud around drinking pools and fords, and here and there temporary corrals showed that the route was regularly organized. Any plainsman could tell without the corrals that the bunch were under direction.

Mahon, who was at the head of the expedition, had by this time learned many of the tricks of tracking. He was aware that the tracks were all too old to warrant following. But, being on the frequented track, he knew he had but to wait until another band would come. So he crossed the Red Deer, and camped beside a small stream, where the trees would hide him and his men from view.

For three days they waited. Then Mahon riding back over the trail found evidences that showed that a bunch had been driven north since they had pitched their camp. In chagrin he returned to his men after following for a short distance the trail which ran around them. Evidently the rustler was an old hand who had been aware of the police, and had simply ridden around. The sergeant was in doubt whether to follow the new trail to the end or trust to waiting. Then his course was decided for him.

A lone rider appeared on a rise far to the southeast. He was sitting quietly in his saddle and appeared to be gazing at something. It was too distant to make out whether he was looking toward them or away from them. A horseman so far from civilization could mean only one thing.

The men quietly led their horses

farther into the trees in the hope that they had not been seen, and in a few minutes were riding along the stream toward the Red Deer. As they topped a roll in the prairie the rider was more plainly visible, looking straight toward them. Not a move did he make. Even when they splashed through the river with the unknown less than half a mile away, he maintained his immobility. He was looking down on them almost absentedly.

With a pang of something like disappointment, Mahon recognized Blue Pete. At the same moment the horseman rose in his stirrups, and waved his hat in the air. Then whirling his horse around on its hind legs, he disappeared over the edge.

Mahon had long dreaded having to participate in the actual chase of his old friend, but when the time came, he determined to do his duty.

For an hour they rode hard without a glimpse of the half-breed. Then, as they mounted an elevation, they saw him sitting quietly on his horse nearly a mile to the southwest. The pursuit was renewed, only to find at the end of another hour that the half-breed was still keeping his distance. Mahon saw the uselessness of wildly pursuing a man who knew the country like Blue Pete. He spread his men out, and for the rest of the day pursuer and pursued bore directly south. As it grew dusk the half-breed drew away, and when last seen was several miles to the south and riding hard.

Mahon drew his men in for the night, and setting the proper changes of guard, went to sleep. There were only about four hours of luminous darkness at this time of the year, so the guard was directed to take his stand on a ridge close at hand with a pair of night glasses. Not a sound disturbed the night.

In the morning, Mahon rose early. On his blanket was a square of paper, and on it the words, "ef i hed been Billsy." Mahon looked at the note and then to where one of his companions lay a few feet distant and just waking up. Only fifty yards to the right the guard sat lazily stretching, and preparing to come down. Blue Pete was still protecting him—Blue Pete, the man his duty called him to follow to the death, the man for whose capture a good price would be paid as soon as he could return to headquarters and report what he now knew.

It seemed terrible to be forced to capture, dead or alive, a man who was systematically guarding his pursuer. For a moment it came into his head to call off the pursuit. After all, he had nothing definite about the half-breed's horse stealing, and certainly the police had been assisted in preventing rustling by Blue Pete's scarcely legible notes. But he was morally certain, and the hot pursuit of yesterday verified his suspicions.

Breakfast was hurriedly eaten, and an early start made southward. Mahon knew Blue Pete would turn to the Cypress Hills as naturally as a gopher makes for its hole. There was no hurry, therefore, and the capture of a man so well acquainted with every hollow and hill in the country would be impossible with his present small force.

As they crossed the railway between Medicine Hat and Irvine, one of Mahon's companions, glancing back over the trail, observed a rider galloping furiously toward them. He became visible as a fellow policeman, and in a few minutes had told his story. He had been sent out from the city to bring them back, and, meeting their trail, had turned and followed it. Mahon was to report with his men at the Lodge. A band of rustlers had driven off some cattle from the Reversed 3 Bar ranch, and had taken to the Hills pursued by four mounted police. Reënforcements had been rushed to them, but further help was needed to surround the hills as far as possible, and make a desperate attempt to stop the rustling for good.

By nightfall, Mahon and his men had arrived at the Hills on fresh mounts and had spread out over a directed course. During the night, shots were heard to the south, showing that the rustlers knew their predicament and

were making an effort to escape across the border.

In the morning, Mahon rode around and received the report that his men had been successful in driving the rustlers back into the Hills. Blood marks showed where one of them had been hit, but the danger of sharpshooting from the trees prevented following the trail immediately.

Mahon, as the policeman to whom the Hills were best known, determined to take one of his men, and to work his way in, and thus try to get the drop on the rustlers. It was a risky piece of work, but success from lying around the Hills seemed impossible with the small force at his command. They had kept the rustlers back one night, but the attempt would probably be renewed on the following evening at some unguarded spot. He selected a coulee some distance east of the blood trail, intending to work back to the trail when he got into the cover of the Hills.

Leaving two policemen near the edge of the Hills to rush to his assistance if shots were heard, and selecting the most experienced of his men, he followed the ravine into the silence of the great wildness, and carefully crawled back to the trail. Only his training under Blue Pete enabled him to discover the faint blood marks among the dead leaves and branches that covered the ground everywhere.

Giving his companion orders to confine his attention ahead and around, Mahon settled down to trailing the spots that here and there showed on the leaves. Deeper and deeper into the Hills they led, and down to the edge of a small lake. Here they vanished, and Mahon could find no traces that afforded him any clue.

Under the circumstances it might have been wiser to withdraw, for any tree might hide the enemy, and there would be no mercy for the police. Once or twice as he stopped suddenly to verify his course, Mahon imagined that he heard a slight rustle in the leaves to his right, but careful scrutiny had revealed nothing.

The position of the two men was an unenviable one. They could not free themselves of the feeling of a presence following, and they knew no rustler would spare them.

They sat down on opposite sides of a tree to decide upon a course, every nerve alert to detect an enemy. Mahon's companion was a dare-devil young fellow equal to any risk and possessing implicit confidence in himself and his superior. Neither was for turning back. The lake lay in front of them, peaceful as any mountain lake. Not a sound was to be heard near at hand, and only an occasional call from an unknown bird from a great distance broke the dense silence. That silence increased the belief in the presence of men around them, and an overpowering feeling of helplessness impelled both men to action.

Mahon determined to take one direction, and Forbes the other, meeting at the opposite side of the lake. A shot from either would summon the other, and bring help from the two companions listening for that signal at the edge of the Hills.

Mahon crawled carefully through the brush at the edge of the lake, his eyes more to his right than in front. He could not shake off the feeling that there was something alive there within a few yards, something deliberately stalking him. But in spite of all his moves, his sudden stops, his intense listening, he could hear nothing. He thought of rushing toward the point, but his good sense showed him that the noise would expose him to every enemy within five hundred yards.

He had proceeded halfway around the end of the lake, when he heard a distinct hiss of warning coming from a clump of bushes where his sensitive nerves told him that the stalker was concealed. Instinctively he crouched low. Then surprise at his action, and at the noise, made him raise his head—to look in front of him straight into the barrel of a rifle, and a shaggy head of yellow hair above it. His heart beat fast as he recognized the anger-distorted visage of Billsy, his sworn enemy.

At the same instant a figure leaped into the open from the clump of bushes, and two rifles spoke almost as one. A cry of a man mortally wounded came from in front, and the one on his right fell slowly to his knees, then sank lower and lower, and rolled down the bank. With a gasp of surprise, Mahon recognized the dark face of Blue Pete. He knew it all now. The half-breed had jumped into the open to draw Billsy's shot, and he had fired just as he was himself hit.

Mahon rushed to him. Billsy's nearness did not trouble him; he knew Blue Pete's shot had gone home.

The half-breed was lying on his side, his eyes closed, and a stain growing larger on his breast. As Mahon bent down, the squint eyes opened, and a smile went over the dark face.

"Guess Billsy got me—that time," he murmured, not a quiver showing any feeling.

"Pete, old boy, why did you do it?" Mahon asked, his voice quivering. He turned the half-breed over carefully, and commenced to unfasten his shirt.

"No use, Boy," said Blue Pete, smiling up in the anxious sergeant's face. "Know when I'm done fer. Better get out uh here. Billsy's mates too many fer yuh."

Mahon interrupted, but Blue Pete went on. "Don't stop me," he said. "Can't talk much. Seems t' leak out here." He held his hand over the wound. "Billsy's bunch is under th' big pine in Pine Coulee. Get 'round them at night." He stopped for a moment. "Rustlin's over fer me, Boy. Hed yuh goin', though—eh? Took 'em up north t' Grand Trunk Pacific 'struction camps. Sold 'em up thar."

Another pause while Mahon raised himself to bring water from the lake. There was a noise at the top of the bank, and something hit him heavily on the head.

He fell like a log, but in a semi-conscious helplessness felt Blue Pete lean over him and feel his face and pulse. Then a crashing in the bushes, and the half-breed disappeared.

Forbes, who had rushed around at the sound of the shots, found Mahon unconscious and bleeding from a head wound inflicted by a large stone that lay near. In a few minutes the two policemen who had been placed to listen for shots arrived, and between them they carried the wounded sergeant out, his senses coming gradually back to him under cold water and chafing. That night the big pine was the scene of an almost bloodless capture of four rustlers, the remainder of Billsy's band.

As the police left the scene they were mystified by a rifle shot back in the Hills, but they dared not stop.

Mahon was placed under a doctor's care at the Lodge, while policemen searched the Hills near the scene of the tragedy for Blue Pete's body. On the second day they returned to report failure. Mahon, with the bandages around his head, rose from the couch where he lay, saddled his horse, and with Forbes entered the Hills. Straight to Blue Pete's cave he led the way. He pulled back the screen of leaves and Forbes entered.

On the pine bed was a stain and nothing more. Yes! Held down by the corner of a box was a sheet of paper, and in the daylight, with his eyes streaming until he could scarcely see, Mahon found stuck across the sheet the heading of his mother's letter:

My Dear Boy. ..

The corner of it was stained with blood, roughly wiped off. Below it Blue Pete had scrawled in a trembling, wandering hand:

i no youl find me. Ken trust you to tek care blue Peets boddy. larned to rit fur you Boy. gled i did now. you dont think i hit you with that stun do you. Bilsy got me whar it hurts en i kent last it out long. kent breeth rit.

The writing scrawled off crookedly over the paper. Then down near the bottom it became more readable, as if the writer had become stronger:

i heer shots neer big pin. hop your oll rit. dont get shot Boy dont.

Then a firmer hand had written:

tel your muther i sevd you agen, wish i could live now for a while and ill try for it. ef i kent good by Boy.

It ended there. Mahon leaned blindly against the big stone at the door of the cave. But where was the poor half-breed now? It scarcely seemed possible that any man could have lived till night with such a wound. Then the heedless devotion of Blue Pete gave him a clue. Together the two men rode rapidly down the coulee toward the big pine. Just a few yards from the cave they came upon it.

The half-breed, whom a simple mother's letter turned into a hero, heedless of his own life, lay on his side, the last of his life's blood congealed on his breast which he had bared in an effort to stop the flow. The old rifle with an empty cartridge was clasped in his hands, one finger on the trigger and bent so hard that the rifle could scarcely be removed. The face was fixed in a look of anxiety that went to Mahon's heart. The day had been too much for the battered head, and the grief-stricken sergeant tumbled limply beside his protector.

It was a simple story Mahon wrote that week to his mother, whose little notes to Blue Pete had always been faithfully delivered until he left the police. It was a story of devotion that comes to few men, of love that passes the love of man for women, of unselfishness that led to death, of misapplied justice that threw a man back to his instincts, of regret for the life that sacrificed itself so willingly.

Mahon read the agony and weakness that had stopped Blue Pete's last note before the big-pine capture. He saw the waning life flicker up at the sound of the shooting—a flicker that strengthened his hand for the farewell to his mother and himself—the awful struggle as the torn and dying half-breed dragged himself out of the cave and toward the big pine, in a last vain effort to be on hand to protect the man he was dying for. And then the rush of blood, the ebb of life, and the last shot as the ugly, cross-eyed half-breed sent his dying message of attempted succor to the mother's boy.

In Windy Coulee, just where it enters the Hills, there is a handmade slab that only the police and a few cowboys, ever see. On it are the words "Greater Love" and nothing more. Mahon would have spent all his earnings on a stone, but he knew the rustler, detective, rustler again, always hero, would sleep better under the work of the hand of "My Dear Boy."

IN LIPTON'S EARLY DAYS

SIR THOMAS LIPTON says it requires a vast deal of courage and charity to be philanthropic, and tells the following story in illustration:

"I remember when I was just starting in business. I was very poor, and making every sacrifice to enlarge my little store in Glasgow. My only assistant was a boy of fourteen, faithful and willing and honest. One day I heard him complaining, and with justice, that his clothes were so shabby that he was ashamed to go to church.

"'There's no chance of my getting a new suit this year,' he told me. 'Dad's out of work, and it takes all of my wages to pay the rent.'

"I thought the matter over, and then took a sovereign from my carefully hoarded savings and bought the boy a stout, warm suit of blue cloth. He was so grateful that I felt repaid for my sacrifice. But the next day he didn't come to work. I met his mother in the street and asked her the reason.

"'Why, Mr. Lipton,' she said, curtsying, 'Jimmie looks so respectable, thanks to you, sir, that I thought I would send him round town to-day to see if he couldn't get a better job.'"

The Stuffed Cat

By Everard Jack Appleton

Author of "The Sea Serpent Syndicate," "Billy Martin, Volcanoist," Etc.

Money makes the world go round. If you don't believe it, read this fantastic little yarn of a hard-up artist. It is told in Everard Jack Appleton's happiest style

THIXTON closed the door of his little hall bedroom, threw his portfolio of drawings on the cot that masqueraded as a couch during the day, and kicked the stuffed cat viciously into the air.

All artists must have a little hall bedroom, as a matter of course; but the stuffed cat was an extra. Usually she sat upon the hearth-rug that lay before Thixton's trunk in lieu of a fireplace, and glared at visitors. The glare, combined with certain stupid art editors' decisions concerning the drawings, had inspired the kick.

The stuffed cat bounced off the violent green wall-paper and impaled itself against the sharp corner of a picture-frame that had been perpetrated when wax flowers on the center-table were fashionable.

"You—even you, grin at my misfortune!" declared Thixton, as the cat swung head down, the calico slowly ripping. "In league with the devil and the art editors to drive me out of the field! I could——"

He paused suddenly.

"No, I couldn't," he added. "I take it all back, puss. You're a true friend—or I'm drunk and disorderly, both."

From the jagged hole which the frame had made, a ten-dollar bill was coyly peeping out at the stuffed cat's injured side; and a moment later Thixton was rapidly transferring the glaring feline's valuable internals to his own pockets. The cat had lost half of her rotundity when there came a knock upon the door.

Thixton looked about for a place to secrete his suddenly acquired wealth; but there are few unseen nooks and corners in a six-by-nine room. All he could do was to drop the cat on the cot, and sit upon her, trickling ten-dollar bills from various pockets as he called out:

"Come in!"

The door opened; and for the first time in many days it was not a collector who turned the handle.

"I beg your pardon," said the big-eyed, too-white girl, pausing, "but mother wasn't sure that your pillow had a clean slip, Mr. Thixton."

"Oh, I think so," replied Thixton, relieved, and, picking the pillow up to draw it across his lap and the telltale legal tender that would show itself. "It was fresh only a few days ago, Miss Germaine."

"You'd better let me see," said she. "Men never know about such things, really. Especially artists!"

"But I'm not an artist," said Thixton, pushing a bill under his coat nervously. "I've heard several editors tell me that to-day."

The girl, who possessed that sort of prettiness which makes you feel like taking her in your arms and saying foolish things to her—if she isn't your stenographer, of course—laughed softly. It was the sort of rippling laugh that made you forget her too-whiteness of cheeks and brow; and every time he heard it, Thixton desired to kiss her.

Kisses were not included in the rent he paid Mrs. Germaine, his landlady, however; but for a fleeting moment he wondered if the money on which he was sitting, as an old hen sits in her endeavor to cover thirty chicks with a feather capacity of only fifteen, would be of any service as an exchange for a kiss.

"But you *are* one," declared Miss Germaine, with a finality that warmed his heart. "The city directory says so, you know."

"Then," said Thixton, "I'll take the city directory with me the next time I try to sell illustrations."

Miss Germaine had crossed the room and laid hands upon the pillow, but Thixton, remembering all that pillow covered—and all that he did not—resisted the attempt to disarm him.

"Really, Miss Germaine," said he, "I don't want you to trouble about this. It is quite clean, you see. Now, run along, like a good little girl, and tell mother the gentleman is too busy to be disturbed."

"But you aren't," said she, releasing her hold reluctantly; "you're not making money nursing a pillow."

Thixton lifted his eyebrows in a superior manner.

"My dear child," said he, "you don't realize how many different kinds of pillows there are in the world. This is a magic one, and it pays me to nurse it, as you say. In fact, I can almost see the money now!"

"Just the same," said Miss Germaine determinedly, "I am going to put a nice, clean slip on it—for a magic pillow must be as carefully cared for as an ordinary one."

Then she ran lightly out of the room—for being slender and not overly tall, Miss Germaine could run lightly, which very few girls outside of novels really do.

Thixton lost no time. The stuffed cat was crammed quickly into his trunk, and the bills shoved into his various pockets. When Miss Germaine returned with the fresh pillow-slip, she found Thixton calmly untying his drawings.

"There!" said he, holding one out for her to gaze upon. "There is a refutation of your statement that I am an artist."

"Um-umph!" said she, holding the pillow between her teeth and pushing its bulging end into the slip.

"If you mean that to be yes," said Thixton somewhat stiffly, "it is not what I expected at all, Miss Germaine. When an artist tells you he isn't one, the proper thing for you to do is to contradict him. It's one of the few times when contradiction is more polite than agreement."

Miss Germaine, having successfully dressed the pillow in its fresh covering, took the picture and looked at it critically.

"I think," said she, "I think I can tell you why it didn't sell. It is too well done."

"There!" said Thixton. "There speaks the true connoisseur. It *is* too well done; it is right on the brink of being burned, in fact!"

"Oh, no, no," cried Miss Germaine, clasping it close to her breast. "Please don't do that. Mother would so like to have it."

"Mother?" repeated Thixton. "Why, she has never seen it."

"But she has seen the original," said Miss Germaine. "Mr. Thixton, don't you know that you have painted *me?* That's why it didn't sell; it is such a big-eyed, white-skinned girl; it would never do for a golf-calendar or an outdoor magazine cover."

Thixton forgot the stuffed cat for the time being, and, taking the picture, walked to the window where the light was better.

"By the great horn spoon and the carving-set as well!" he exclaimed, "you're right. I *have* painted you—and I didn't know it. What do you suppose that means?"

"Nothing," said Miss Germaine, moving toward the door. Had he looked close at her he might have seen that her eyes were glistening—but he didn't.

"It must—it must mean something, you know," said Thixton decidedly. And then he forgot everything but the girl—for a luminous thought had come

to him. Being a young man of action, he lost no time in mentioning the thought.

"It means," said he slowly and very gently—for love is a thing to make a man speak slowly—"it means that I love you."

Miss Germaine straightened up quickly, and a flood of color came into her cheeks. She didn't look like the picture at all just then, but rather like a diminutive goddess of war about to go into battle.

"Mr. Thixton," said she as icily as a cup of sorbet, "I do not appreciate such humor!"

"Humor?" repeated poor Thixton, to whom the revelation was acting like rich wine, sending his blood pounding through his veins in a very riot of joy. "Why, Grace, darling, it isn't humor. It is serious fact! I love you. I know it now, and I am only telling you humbly, blunderingly, perhaps, but sincerely, sincerely, dear! I love you, I love you!"

"Ridiculous!" said Miss Germaine, though faintly. "I—I am sure something has affected your brain, Mr. Thixton; if you loved me, it would not be necessary for one of your own pictures to awaken you to the fact."

The perverseness of woman! She knew he loved her; she had known it for weeks and months, and yet she deliberately told him it was ridiculous! If he had agreed, then, that she was right—well, there would have been no story to tell.

Thixton walked slowly to where she stood and took both hands firmly in his.

"It was not the picture," said he. "It was you. I have known it in my soul a long time; but my inartistic brain has been so busy trying to make a living that I have put resolutely aside the chance of happiness that the love of a girl like you would bring me. I will never be worthy of you, but that shall not deter me now from trying to win you; for I love you, Grace, I love you devotedly and wholly. There! you can say it is absurd if you like, but some day—some day you are going to marry me. Look up!"

Yes, he said all that. It was a long speech, longer than Thixton was in the habit of making; but the provocation was an extraordinary one, and he knew he must make that precious little package of femininity know, once for all, that she was the most important interest in life to him.

She looked up, straight into his eyes, as he had told her to.

And, of course, he did just what *you* would have done under the circumstances.

This time he saw the big gray eyes fill with tears—for when the gates of happiness open with a kiss, love often looks through the tears of joy, especially if you are a small girl who has led a somewhat lonely life. And so, the little arms crept up around his neck, and the tears tric'zled down her cheeks and into his vest pocket, while he held her clasped tight and wondered cheerfully what had become of the floor. He was assuredly not standing on anything more material than air!

He landed upon it very soon, however, for in reaching for a handkerchief to help dry those tears, Thixton pulled out a wad of the bills. Whose money was it, after all? There must be a thousand dollars there; but was he the rightful owner? Had he fallen heir to love and a small fortune in the same hour? And should he explain to Grace, or keep it secret?

All these questions rushed upon him in bewildering confusion. He needed room to think: room and a quiet hour. He must not delay—and yet, he could not sacrifice this delirious joy.

"There's mama coming up the stairs," whispered the girl; "what would she say? Oh, I am ashamed."

"Of me—or of the way you dressed the pillow?" demanded Thixton, with the recently acquired note of possession in his voice. "You darling, let mama come. We will tell her the gladsome news——"

"We will do nothing of the sort," said Miss Germaine decidedly, also with the note of recently acquired authority; and she ran out of the room. At the door she turned.

"Promise me you won't say anything," said she earnestly.

"I won't," declared Dick, "if you will call me by my first name and let me kiss you again!"

"Richard!" said Miss Germaine, and the rippling little laugh that followed showed the tears were checked.

Never mind whether he got the rest of the bargain; this is a story of money, not love, anyway.

With ten of the bills in his pocket, Thixton went down-stairs and out into the street. New York was doing its best to be cheerful under the circumstances; but springtime in New York is not always lovely; and a sullen sky looked down upon a city of slush and mud—a city that is happy only after dark. He gazed at the sky and the streets; then he splashed through the snow and dirt until he reached the quiet little café where he usually ate.

Scarcely had he ordered, when fate, taking a hand in the game, sent Miller in.

"Sit down," said Thixton, "and have a bite with me. I have money."

Even this astonishing and unusual statement did not impress Miller, however.

"Haven't time," said he. "But I'll take a glass of ale."

Miller was not an artist. He was only a bank cashier and a good friend —unfinancially—of Thixton's.

"If I find a thousand dollars in ten-dollar bills in my room," said Thixton, "to whom does it belong?"

"To the owner," said Miller, drinking slowly.

"But if I don't know or can't find the owner?"

"You, then. Why?"

"Because I've found it," replied Thixton, and he told the story of the stuffed cat. When he had finished, he drew out one of the bills to pay the waiter, and Miller picked it up. He looked long and hard at it; then he brought money from his own pocket, and, brushing aside the protests of Trixton, paid the tab.

When the waiter had gone, Thixton indignantly whisked the bill out of Miller's hand. It dropped beside his chair, and the man at the table just back of Dick picked it up. He, too, looked at the bill curiously before handing it back, with a nod.

"Now, what the dev——" began Thixton, but Miller coughed loud and rose.

"Going my way?" he asked, and Dick followed him out, still grumbling.

When they had reached the pavement Miller turned to his friend.

"Your ten-dollar bill is a rank counterfeit," said he dryly.

Thixton stared at him. "That's why," continued Miller briefly. "Understand? Dangerous to even have it in your possession. Get rid of it as quick as you can—burn it up. Whoever stuffed your cat filled her with naughty money, all right."

"The devil!" said Thixton, as being the only appropriate remark he could think of. He was vainly endeavoring to remember where the cat had come from. He must have got it somewhere—bought it for a model, or—— No! He remembered, now; Mrs. Germaine had put it in his room!

She had told him at the time, though he paid little attention to it, that her husband, since dead, had stuffed the foolish-looking animal while he lay sick one afternoon, for something better to do. He had even sewed it up himself, she said, while she was out, and they had laughed about the long and clumsily placed stitches.

Thixton felt sick. If you have ever had counterfeit money in your possession, you will know how sick. It is probably a thousand times worse than trying to pass a plugged nickel off on the conductor in the rush hours. In addition, was not his heart torn with anxiety and love?

That money meant—good heavens!—it meant that *her* father was a criminal! It also meant that he, Richard Thixton, could not say a word about the money. It meant complication upon complication, arrest, the penitentiary, the loss of Grace's love, and bachelorhood for life—because they do not encourage marriages in the penitentiaries.

"Now that that is settled," said Miller cheerfully, "let's walk down-town a little way. It will do us both good."

"Settled!" said Thixton bitterly. "It is nothing of the sort. It is all stirred up, and I—I, Miller, am a doomed man!"

"Out of the way, there, ye fools!" howled a policeman on the crossing, sweeping them back to the sidewalk to allow a motor-car to pass.

Miller shrugged his shoulders. "If it will make you any happier, go ahead and be," said he. "But don't stop to tell me so in front of a forty-horse-power touring-car. I'm not doomed, thank you."

They walked on. Behind them walked the man who had picked the fatal bill up in the café and handed it back to Thixton politely. Neither Thixton nor Miller knew he was there.

At Forty-second Street Miller boarded a car and returned to work.

"If you get into trouble," said he thoughtfully, "let me know. I'll be glad to come around——"

"And get me out?" asked Thixton dolefully.

"——read to you in your cell," said Miller.

Thixton failed to see the humor of the remark, but Miller enjoyed it for a block after they had separated.

"What's going to happen, and what shall I do?" demanded Thixton of the next mail-box he met. The mail-box, not being clairvoyant, did not answer, and Thixton swung past gloomily.

Behind him swung the man of the café.

It was almost dark when Thixton reached the house again. He had tramped many weary miles, trying to determine what to do, but he climbed the stairs still undecided.

On the way, he met Miss Germaine. She was coming down to close the door after him, for, being an artist, and of dreamy manner, he rarely remembered that doors are best closed, especially if a light-footed man has been following you all afternoon.

Though Miss Germaine and Mr. Thixton had passed on these same stairs many times before, it took them longer than ever to do it this time; and when the feat was finally accomplished, her hair was ruffled more than usual.

Dick's exaltation, resulting from the meeting, lasted until he reached his room again. Then the stuffed cat took precedence. He glanced at her, lying supine, lank, and unfeeling, in the trunk. Her money was all there apparently, and he took some of it out again to examine, near the window.

Dick looked out, and saw the man hastening across the street. A large, energetic chill shot up his spine and down again. The truth, like a spot-light, flashed upon him, and he felt the manacles upon his wrists at that moment.

He turned from the window to gather himself together for the ordeal that must come, and remembered Grace and her mother.

He had the choice of two rôles to play: the martyred hero or the coward. Should he tell the truth and blacken Germaine's name forever, or pay the penalty of a counterfeiter himself? The latter meant years in durance vile; the former, loss of Grace forever. He would take the lighter sentence.

With the trunk still open, he began stuffing the money in his pockets, when a heavy body hurled itself across the room and strong hands gripped him by the throat. Thixton gasped for breath, knowing full well what it meant. Yet at the same time, a righteous anger seized upon him; there was no use maltreating a prisoner of the government, he argued, and he wrenched himself about, with clenched fist, to strike.

In the second it required to do this, however, a legal phrase shot through his mind: "Resisting an officer of the law." The fist relaxed.

"All right," said Thixton, "let me up. I surrender."

The man took his knee out of the pit of the artist's stomach and pulled him slowly to his feet by the wrists.

"Give me those bills, quick!" said he.

Thixton nodded, but before the man could release his hands, a pair of very small, white ones had attacked the vis-

itor's unprotected face, from behind, digging into his cheeks with nails that were pink but sharp. With a howl of pain and rage, he turned to beat off his assailant, but she tripped him neatly, and he fell heavily to the floor.

"Now!" cried Grace, her eyes like evening stars. "Sit on him, Dick!"

"But"—Dick must begin his martyrdom by confessing to the girl he loved a crime he had never committed.

"If you don't I will!" she exclaimed.

Dick sat. Tearing off the heavy window-curtain cords, Grace whipped them about the man's hands, in and out like a complicated piece of embroidery, while he shook his head and tried to find words adequate to express his chagrin, as well as anger.

When she had him nicely trussed, Dick arose, and the man sat up cross-legged, and glared, much as the cat had glared.

"Did he hurt you, Dick?" asked the girl anxiously.

"No," said Thixton, feeling even more foolish than he looked. "You see, dear, he—that is, I—oh, speak up, you duffer, and tell her!" He emphasized his remark with a kick on the shins.

The man spoke bitterly, and with the welts on his face growing whiter and whiter with anger.

"Cat!" said he.

Dick sprang angrily forward.

"If your hands weren't tied I'd thrash you for that," said he hotly. "I don't care a rap if you are a representative of the government."

The visitor opened his eyes wider than ever. Then he rose to his feet clumsily.

"Cut that out," said he. "You ain't got any call to josh a man that's pinched—and by a girl, at that. Call the coppers, and get it over with. I'm ready to take me medicine—youse caught me dead to rights, I know."

Thixton's heart jumped into his throat at that.

"Then you are?" he asked.

"The guy what made those plates your phony money was printed from. Have you gotter have things in one syllable before you kin git next?" said the man angrily. "Think I was a Sunday-school superintendent calling for contributions?"

He shook his head again. "I know one thing, though," he added, "I'm no dummy like you. I'm an artist in my line—see?"

"An artist?" repeated Grace, clasping her hands. "Why, he isn't a friend of yours, is he, Dick? It wasn't just a foolish, friendly quarrel, was it?"

"I don't know," answered Thixton wearily. "He is apparently a friend in disguise—although I never saw him before to-day."

"Then," remarked Grace decidedly, "I am going to telephone for the police. He was trying to hurt you when I came in, and he shall be punished for it."

"I am," said the man, grinning, "unless dese scratches of yours was love——"

"Shut up!" growled Dick warningly. "Grace, I'll handle him now. I want a few moments' talk with him alone, dear, if you don't care."

Reluctantly she left the room.

"Who the devil are you?" demanded Thixton.

"Never mind my name," replied the prisoner. "I made the bill you had to-day. Where'd you git it? I don't remember you ever being one of the pigeons to shove the stuff. That's why I follered you. It ain't safe, cully, to run the stuff out now—they're next, dead next to it."

"How long ago did you make that money?" asked Thixton, paying no attention to the friendly warning.

"Five years," said the man. Dick winced. Mr. Germaine had died a year after the money had been floated. If the man was turned over to the authorities, the whole miserable story would undoubtedly come out, and then, and then——

It shouldn't come out.

When Grace returned, the prisoner was gone—the fire-escape had been his means of exit. Thixton sat on his cot, with hands tied carefully, and a handkerchief acting as a gag.

"Oh, oh!" she cried, springing to release him. "And this is the way he repaid you! I know exactly how he did it—told you some pitiful story about his wife and children, and you let him go—and then he did this! I wish—I wish I had scratched harder."

Thixton caught at the gauzy idea as a drowning man at a sinking life-preserver.

"I am a miserable, weak fool," said he, holding up his hands that she might release them. "But he didn't take anything, dear." Would that he had taken the money! he thought.

Miss Germaine gazed long at her lover when the cords were once more holding the curtains back, and then she laughed.

"You poor, old, soft-hearted boy," said she, with that motherliness our sweethearts sometimes adopt toward us, "you need a guardian!"

"I do," he admitted, "and I hope to have one soon—for life."

Probably he would have said more, had not Mrs. Germaine appeared, and the whole story from Grace's standpoint had to be told her, with many interruptions, of course.

"There's no use trying to find him now," said Thixton. "He has had a good half-hour start, and I wouldn't be sure of his face even if I saw it again——"

"Not even with my finger-nail marks on it?" demanded Grace smilingly.

"Wasn't she the bravest girl that ever lived?" said Thixton proudly. "If it had not been for her pluck and quick-wittedness, we all might have been murdered right now. She's certainly——"

And so on, for another half-hour. You know the style—perhaps you've had similar experiences; for the man who has been saved by the girl he is going to marry must never tire of enlarging upon the facts. It is the toll true love exacts from him.

When Mrs. Germaine and Grace had gone again, Dick sat down to think. He needed to run through the matter again; the moving-pictures had been rushed past him at such a rate during the day that he had not been able to see anything but a blur. But fate, like time and tide, waits for no man; and a heavy step on the stair brought him to the door again and face to face with Miller.

"I dropped in on my way home," said that worthy, "to have a look at that bill again. I am interested professionally, you see—and I don't want you to get in trouble, either."

"Neither do I!" said Thixton grimly.

"Oh, I don't read aloud so badly as all that—and I would pick lively stories," remarked Miller easily. "Let's have a look at it again."

Thixton handed him the bill he had nearly used at the café.

The bank cashier scanned it closely.

"Yes," said he, "a rattling good piece of work—but a bad piece of money. Let's see the rest."

Thixton disgorged the whole lot, from pockets and trunk. Miller went over them all carefully, though more rapidly than the first, remarking under his breath now and again: "Hum!"

When he had finished, and they were all piled up neatly beside him on the table, he handed Thixton the first, and placed his hand on the others.

"Dick, my boy," said he, "you're in luck."

"I seem to be—bad luck!"

"No! The only bad bill in the lot is the one you had at the café. The rest are as good as gold, Uncle Sam's money from start to finish. Whoever left it for you to find had simply had that counterfeit passed upon him by some one else. Burn it, find the owner of the rest, and you can close the incident!"

Thixton's answer was unexpected.

"God bless that stuffed cat!" he exclaimed, with a heartiness that seemed inappropriate to the listener. "God bless her!"

"Your prayers for a feline——" began Miller, but he was talking to empty air.

Thixton was hanging over the banister like a boy, calling loudly:

"Grace! Mrs. Germaine! Come up, please! I've got money—real money—for you; and I am not going to the penitentiary!"

Pitcher Mike's Message

YES, son, we players like the game, but sometimes things go wrong.
And then our fielding suffers some and we don't bat so strong.
You see, we'd worked to second place, the fans were with us then,
They'd made a bunch of little gods of me and all the men,
And that day, when we took the field, the bleachers went stark mad—
I've heard some cheering in my time, but that was loudest, lad.

Big Mike was in the box for us—and, say, how he could pitch!
He used to fan 'em one, two, three, without a pause or hitch,
And in that game he settled down to treat the crazy fans;
Though every batter tried his best, they couldn't spoil his plans.
But we were all afraid of Mike, because he had the blues—
His little kid at home was sick—he'd had some real bad news—
He brought the letter to the field; we tried to ease his mind,
But he was just as blue a chap as you would ever find.

Well, in the eighth they found the ball, and Mike went in the air;
They piled up three good runs on us, and earned 'em fair and square;
But we went in and tied the score and made one extra run;
Then cap spoke up, "You hold 'em, Mike; keep steady, and we've won."
Then, just as Mike was starting out, a yellow message came,
The cap knew it was risky work at that stage of the game;
But he had made a promise that all news about the kid
Would get to Mike; and that is why things happened as they did.

In silence we stood 'round him as he took the written sheet,
He quickly grasped the contents, then it fluttered to his feet;
The cap stooped down and picked it up—Mike nodded—and he read:
"The baby can't live over night—please come at once," it said.
Mike stood and figured while we watched; he knew a train would leave
In just about an hour's time; we saw his great chest heave—
"I'll stick," he choked; "I'm needed here." The cap just wrung his hand,
And out we went to play the game, a sad-faced little band.

We knew Mike's heart was broken then—the kiddie was his life:
He talked about it always and about his pretty wife;
We didn't see how he could work; the strain was surely great,
But, son, the balls he shot across well-nigh burned up the plate!
O'Dowd was first, and Mike wound up; his jaw was set and hard,
That batter missed those cannon shots, and missed them by a yard!
When little Connor ambled up, Mike studied him a bit,
And great big chunks of atmosphere were what that fellow hit.

The last man tried and passed away, and, 'mid the deafening cheers,
Mike rubbed his arm across his eyes, and wiped away the tears.
Then some big swell came nosing round; he got us to explain,
And shoved Mike in a touring car and rushed him to that train.
The kiddie lived, but, all the same, Mike thought that it was lost,
And none of us will ever know the grief that inning cost.
He stuck it out with bleeding heart—yes, son, we like to play,
But sometimes we have not the zest you saw us show to-day.

CHARLES R. BARNES.

In Paradise Cañon

By Edwin L. Sabin

Author of "Chrysanthemums," "Tiddles-Toddles Tales," Etc.

In which the Reverend Jamison Daniels receives a call to manhood pure and simple, that has nothing to do with theologic ethics. An example of how presence of mind in untried emergencies proves the metal of a man.

THE Reverend Jamison Daniels awoke. It seemed to him that he awoke, and, as a matter of psychology, he did awake, passing from unconsciousness or subconsciousness to consciousness. Only, in like sense that this unconsciousness had not been his ordinary sleeping, so this return was not his ordinary awakening. He was prone, but twisted, wet, and bewildered, gazing athwart a gravelly, sagy slope, which, beginning at his nose, slanted upward, was interrupted by a sheer brownish wall of rock, and, resuming beyond, continued to meet another wall, which cut the bending blue sky. He was uncomfortable; and the longer he lay, cogitating, the more uncomfortable he grew. So, presently, he sat up.

Yes, he was alive—God be praised, Who had spared him. And he recalled with a little twinge of shame, as a backslider, the agonized cry of terror which had filled his heart when the wolfish elements had swept him out of the car and away. Had he then been afraid to die? He who preached every week, well-nigh, upon the trust with which the Christian should face eternity? The thought passed through him with a sudden shock, from which his keenly sensitive temperament shrank with positive pain.

But he was afforded scant space for such analysis and retrospection. He was not alone, here, where the wind and the rain had flung him. Ten yards distant, lay the huddled form of a woman. Theologic ethics were forgotten in the call to manhood pure and simple. With a startled exclamation, the Reverend Jamison Daniels staggered to his feet, and hastened to the body.

The common impulse as a man and as a minister of the gospel which had prompted him to this, prompted him also to turn the body gently, so that he might uncover the face. As he succeeded, a very pretty girl opened her dark eyes, and they looked straight up into his gray ones. Whereupon the Reverend Jamison Daniels drew back, with an embarrassed involuntary:

"I beg your pardon."

At this, the eyes slowly closed again; the countenance whitened; and even his male experience told him that she had fainted.

The Reverend Jamison Daniels was somewhat perplexed. He glanced around for help. The deep gulch, lined on either side with the gravel and sage and rock walls, seemed to contain as living beings only those two. In this moment of appeal, the brownness of the rocks and the grayness and greenness of the brush about, the blueness of the sky overhead, and the wetness from the late flood underfoot, impressed themselves as by flash light upon his brain; for he was most distressed. But

to his search no response was made. The gulch witnessed, imperturbable.

It struck him as rather absurd to throw water upon a person already soaked; but he bolted to a small pool left by the flood in a hollow of the rock bed, and, bolting back again, with water held in his two palms, sprinkled —carefully—her face. This he did several times; and then, in decided anxiety, he knelt beside her, and fell to chafing her hands.

They were soft, slender hands, extremely well kept. The left had a solitaire diamond ring upon the third finger. From the right it was necessary to disengage a feminine hand bag of the flat, two-quart size, which he recognized as a popular and fashionable companion of the sex. Upon its side was a large monogram in silver; and as he industriously, persistently, and not unpleasantly, rubbed, his eyes proceeded to pick out the letters. He trusted that he was not o'er forward in so doing.

"E. B. M." Goodness! Could it be she? E. B. M.—Edith Ball Morgan? Dick's fiancée! 'Twas not improbable. Dick had written that she might be on that train—and his description fitted. Ah, now must the Reverend Jamison Daniels save her at all hazard; save her not only for herself, but for Dick. A prayer renewed welled in his heart, and he worked more desperately, even to the point of apologetically slapping her cheeks.

The lids fluttered; she sighed deeply, and again those large eyes of dark seal-brown opened, to examine him widely, questioningly. The hand which he was methodically chafing mildly pulled away, and he most promptly dropped it.

"Don't be alarmed," he hastened to address. "You are perfectly safe." He fumbled in his pocket, and extracted a sodden cardcase. "I am the Reverend Jamison Daniels. I was to officiate at yours and Dick's wedding ceremony, you may remember. You are perfectly safe." She struggled up to a sitting posture, her face flushing—the flush being, he thought, a good sign; also, it was a very becoming one. "Ah—my cards are in rather bad shape, owing to the wetting, but you can make out the name." He extended one to her. "And you are Miss Morgan, I am sure. You see, I have recognized you by your hand bag. E. B. M.—Edith Ball Morgan, is it not? That is the name Dick gave me. His description fits you very well. You are perfectly safe. We seem to have had a wreck, and, by a singular coincidence, you and I have been cast here together."

"I begin to remember," she said, with a puzzled frown.

He studiously prattled on, designning, out of his experience with hysterical or imbecile parishioners, indulgently to reassure her by calm, dispassionate talk.

"Yes. This is an unconventional way for a bride-to-be to meet the officiating clergyman; but I trust that you will recall me, on the train. I was in the observation car when you entered it, just before the accident."

She answered, more brightly:

"Yes, I do remember you; and I wondered if you might not be the clergyman."

"Dick had written that you might be on the train; but I had not picked you out yet. Now, are you hurt, anywhere?"

"Listen! What was that?" The girl's glorious eyes widened still farther, her lips parted. Below, down the wash, or bed, of the cañon, sounded a series of convulsive, cough-y explosions, half human, half animal, and altogether alarming.

"A bear!" she faltered.

But the sounds gave denial, for they resolved themselves into a "Hello! Hello-oh-oh! Hel-lo-oh!" ragged, yet a part of speech.

"Somebody else in need," volunteered the Reverend Jamison. "I had better go and see. Pardon me a minute."

And he went. An instant the girl gazed after his slender but well set-back and clean shoulders, in the clerical garb; a little smile, almost a laugh, broke her red lips farther apart, to

show the dazzling teeth within. She shrugged her own shoulders, equally well set, with a mien of pretty, defiant acceptation, and her hands flew to take inventory of her hair.

Along the bushy, rocky bed of the cañon returned the Reverend Jamison, conducting a high-shouldered, undersized youth, in a familiar visored cap of dark blue, set at a rakish angle.

"This is the train boy, William Jones, Miss Morgan," he informed. "He is a castaway, also."

William Jones spasmodically struck his colors, instantly to replace them at the angle aforesaid.

"Pleased to meet you, ma'am," he croaked. "Guess we must be the only bunch in here." He coughed terrifically, and apologized: "Swallered a lot of water."

Thus the cañon depths, so remote, so lonely, so self-sufficient with their meed of brush and stone and blue sky and sunshine, unexpectedly had received this invasion:

A young woman, bareheaded, with soft, full face, slightly oval, slightly olive, slightly pink, healthily clear; short, red, soft lips; fathomless, round, dark eyes, under arched, dark brows; firm little chin, firm little nose, with indented nostrils; pearly white, even teeth; massy dark hair, matching the eyes; a figure not extravagant, but rounded, lithe, and perfect, enveloped in a brown tailor suit, rather damp.

A clergyman, bareheaded, aged twenty-eight—one does not need to catalogue the girl by years; loveliness has no age—smooth-shaven, priestly in this and in a certain judicial asceticism, imposed evidently by the nobless oblige of his calling; slender but vigorous, in clerical garb as damp as the tailor suit; gray-eyed, strong-featured; a young clergyman, such as the more studious ranks of theological seminaries produce.

A "train butcher"—William Jones, looking his name, with the addition of much redness, due to coughing, and much grime, due to his vocation and the elements which had brought him hither; naturally sixteen and professionally forty; sporting jauntily his official cap, and refusing, withal, to be the worse for wear.

"Can you move?" asked the Reverend Jamison solicitously of the girl.

She sprang alertly, yet with an effort, to her feet.

"I'm all right," she announced. "But —is there anybody else?"

"No, ma'am; not below here. I come up a mile, and didn't see nothin'," declared William Jones.

"But maybe—above?" Her hesitant tone implied much: Dread, hope, doubt. Her eyes sought the Reverend Jamison's.

"What's the matter with goin' to see?" quoth William Jones hoarsely. "What d'you say?"

"You go." The girl addressed both.

"If you don't mind being left alone, perhaps that would be the proper plan. There may be other sufferers," admitted the Reverend Jamison.

"Aw, I'll go," said William Jones cheerfully. "If there are any live ones, I'll fetch 'em back; and if there are any dead ones, we can bury 'em, you bet. Minister right on board."

"How dreadful!" gasped the girl, as William disappeared. She sobered, and her eyes filled. "I hope he doesn't find anything. So you think many were killed? Oh, dear!"

"In the midst of life we are in death," observed the Reverend Jamison Daniels dutifully.

Coming from youth to youth, here in this vivid, semi-tropic, Western cañon, lying warm under yellow sun and blue sky, enlivened once more with hum of happy insects and voice of busy bird, the quotation sounded most laborious.

"At any rate," spoke the Reverend Jamison, further, "we shall have good news for Dick. We must try and reach him with it before any bad news gets to him."

"Oh, Dick. I hope it *will* be good news that reaches him. But it's all so dreadful. I——" And she was crying.

The Reverend Jamison surveyed her;

deeply moved but indecisive, he surveyed her.

"My dear young lady," he attempted. "My dear young lady——" Various phrases flitted through his mind—portions of the litany, of the prayers for the dying, of prayer for those in peril at sea; but none exactly fitted the situation. He eyed the solitaire, and as to what were the proprieties and customs of acting, in such a situation, as clergyman and custodian of another man's fiancée, he did not know.

And he did what doubtless was the best thing—he let her cry, until, with an abrupt change, she lifted her face, fairly sparkling through the tears, and said emphatically: "How foolish!"

With this remarkable young woman there was no tapering off, in grief; no tapering off, of choked sobs, blubbering, woeful lids, dabbling of eyes. The wetness and the pitiful despair vanished instantly, under her smile; and she remarked again, with feminine accusation:

"How silly! I'm not helping matters, am I!"

A blithe whistle attuned to "Annie Laurie" approached from the distance whence William Jones had withdrawn, and presently the passage of William Jones through bushes and over rocks was heard. The girl sat rigid, intent; the Reverend Jamison Daniels fidgeted; it was a moment of suspense.

"Nothin' doin'," apprised William Jones, his cap at an angle demanded by the proximity of lady fair. "Nothin' but these here rocks and bushes. Cañon pinches out just above, 'bout a quarter mile. Ends right against solid rock, a thousand foot high."

"Oh, I'm so glad," sighed the girl—her mind upon the initial part of his report. "So you didn't find anybody, at all?"

"No, ma'am. We're the limit. And how," asked William Jones, "are we goin' to get out?"

"First, tell me what happened. How did we get *in?*" She addressed the Reverend Jamison.

"We were wrecked, in the midst of an unusual rain and wind," he adduced. "It seemed to me that the car turned completely over."

"Aw, we struck a cloudburst, up in cut number two, on Querque Pass," supplemented William Jones bluffly, not satisfied with so lame an explanation. "Regular cloudburst; worst I ever see." Out of his vast railroader knowledge he delivered this. "Took the train off the track, and washed us out the car and down in here. Guess the rest stayed up."

"But how *are* we to get out, then?" proposed the girl. "We must find some place we can send news from."

"Purty hard climbin'," adjudged William Jones, eying either side knowingly. "It's all like this for a mile down, and the same the other way. I've been lookin' for a way out, myself."

"Let's try, anyway," encouraged the girl. She shook out her skirts. "That will help us to get dry."

"Yes, by all means, let us try," agreed the Reverend Jamison. "Nothing is gained without trying. Where would be the nearest telegraph station, William?"

"From cut number two, where we was struck?"

"Yes; or from here."

"Aw, gee! what do I know about here? Where we was struck was between Tie Sidin' and Pinto. You tell me how fur the burst took us, and I'll tell you where we are—mebbe."

"Shall we try the right or the left, first?" asked the girl.

"Come along. I'll lead you," proffered William Jones.

He commenced to climb; she followed; the Reverend Jamison Daniels protectively took the rear.

The twain sides of the cañon were practically identical—first that slope of loose, shaly, brown, gravel-like drift, dotted with sage and pincushion cactus; then a wall of reddish brown rock, curiously weather-eaten, but smoothed and perpendicular and fifteen feet high; then the slope again, to the foot of the final rim rock, fringed at the top by cedars and capped by blue sky.

"Say, ain't this swell, though!"

called back William Jones. "I never explored before. This is the first time I ever was in the mountains, and I've been crossin' 'em, too, every other day for three years now."

"We must be careful and not tire Miss Morgan," cautioned the Reverend Jamison from his post in the rear.

"Oh, don't think of me." She halted panting, and faced him a moment. "It takes one's breath, doesn't it!" she said, tucking at a stray lock of hair.

"Can't get up this wall no place *I* find," reported William Jones, from above. "'Less you have stickers on your feet and hands like a fly. But I'll go along a little ways. You wait."

"William is very original," commented the Reverend Jamison. He wiped his brow.

"Decidedly," she agreed.

They waited, there upon the gravelly, sagy slope.

From a distance William again hailed: "Here's some steps leadin' up. Come on."

"Where are you?"

William directed. Skirting the wall, they found him around a shoulder of it, standing before a faint succession of steps, cut shallowly and making oblique ascent of the face of the cliff—here sloping slightly back.

"Shall we climb her?" demanded William eagerly.

"Can you?" asked the Reverend Jamison Daniels, turning to the girl.

With a little pucker of dismay, she surveyed the steps.

"They aren't very large, are they?" she faltered.

"Just your size, lady," asserted William gallantly.

"If I could shorten my skirt——" she hazarded.

"Use the hand-holts; then it's easy," declared William Jones, now halfway up. "I'll haul you when you get fur enough. Oh, gee!" he exclaimed, from the top. "Come on. There's more steps in another cliff!"

"I'll try," said the girl.

With a blush she stooped, and by means of pins mysteriously produced, she fastened up the front of her skirt farther above her trim insteps.

The stairs were shallow, and they were small; but they had been cut slanting inward, and had even been corrugated; while paralleling them accompanied a set of still smaller hollows, for the fingers of a hand to clutch. With the Reverend Jamison anxiously attending below, ready to catch her should she fall, she ascended nimbly. The Reverend Jamison followed.

They were upon a landing, as it were, of gravelly sod, whence another set of stairs led up the face of a second wall.

"Say, this is swell, ain't it!" jubilated William Jones, commencing at those stairs also. "Wonder who cut these steps? Mebbe it's a bandit's roost."

And——

"Say!" he called, disappearing. "Hurry up! Here's a regular house built in under the rock, and a whole lot of rooms."

They climbed.

II.

William Jones had spoken truly. When they achieved this second landing, before them extended the rooms.

They had been formed by partitioning off the space here with walls of flat stones laid one upon another and cemented with mud. The landing extended back for thirty feet and more. It was a ledge and niche in one, for the cliff jutted forward. In the maw of the V thus formed, lying on its side, were these rooms. The first, just to the left of where the ascent had been made, was exposed by reason of the breaking down of a portion of the wall, side and front. An adjoining room was indicated by another wall, and a low, rectangular opening for a door.

How much farther the rooms extended could not be told at once.

"Oh!" murmured the girl. "Is it a fort?"

"Come on," bade William, from the recesses whither he already had penetrated. "She's swell."

"Where are you?" queried the Reverend Jamison Daniels.

"Through the holes."

"Shall we join him?" deferred the Reverend Jamison, to his companion.

She stepped forward, but halted, grasping hesitantly her skirts.

"Are there snakes?" she appealed.

The Reverend Jamison considered. He pursed his lips.

"There might be. Are there any snakes, William?"

"Naw. Come on. I've found somethin' to eat, too!"

Leaving the dazzling sunshine which flooded full the ledge without, they entered into the cloistral coolness of the room; the girl taking precedence through the rift in the crumbled wall. Overhead was slanting sandstone of reddish hue, underfoot was the stone floor, worn smooth and sprinkled here and there with masonry; behind, the angle of the V was walled up; before, a jagged hole in that wall framed a vista of blue sky and silvery gray cañon.

"Comin'?" demanded the impatient William. "This is the best place, where I am."

"Permit me," interposed the Reverend Jamison to his companion; and stepping before her he now took the precedence, for the doorway was dark and low. Stooping, and gathering the skirts of his clerical coat, he penetrated onward, and vanished.

"Is it all right?" interrogated the girl, nervously waiting.

"Yes. You can come. Don't be afraid."

As she emerged, he assisted her to stand again. She gazed about curiously. This was another room, its walls intact, lighted by two square, small windows like the windows of a cell, set at the height of one's head in the front wall. In the rear the space extended clear to the apex of the V, where ceiling and floor finally met.

In the gloom, there, sounded a rustle; and while the two stared apprehensively the figure of William Jones suddenly advanced upon them. The girl checked a startled shriek.

"Where did you come from, that way?" accused the Reverend Jamison.

"There's some more rooms beyond; but they ain't no good," said William, grinning and grimy. "This is the dandy. Say, did you look around any?"

He pointed about triumphantly.

"There's an old blanket in the corner—see?—where somebody's been sleepin,' I bet you; and in that hole's a lot of stuff to eat. Want a drink? I found a spring, too!"

"By all means," quoth the Reverend Jamison.

The girl brightened expectantly.

"It's just back in here. I'll fetch you some," proffered William, and followed by her urgent "Please!" he scurried into the gloom. Therefrom he proudly returned bearing carefully a battered and dripping quart tin can.

"Oh!" gasped the girl, after her long, luxurious quaff. "Delicious. Thank you, William."

"Ice cold, ain't it?" commended William. "Comes down right out the rock. Want to see?"

He led them back. The gloom opened. At the closure of the V, where all three must crouch, a spring trickled down the rock, and, after collecting in a hollow like a large bowl, seeped away.

The Reverend Jamison dipped, and drank tremendously.

"Ah!" he sighed. "Fine."

"Bully, ain't it?" congratulated William. "Best water ever *I* tasted." He also drank, gulping largely. "There's the place to get through into those other rooms"—pointing. "But they ain't any good."

He indicated a narrow passage, formed by the ending of the partition wall.

"Want to see 'em?" He spoke with an air of conductorship.

"I don't," averred the girl. "I hate to leave this lovely water."

"Did you say there was something to eat, William?" reminded the Reverend Jamison.

"Sure." William conducted toward the front again. He reached up into a square opening in the wall, and abstracted its treasures.

"Flour in this sack, and bacon in this here paper, and some beans. Must be an old fort, I bet; and this is some stuff left over after the Injuns massacreed it. I looked for skel'tons, but I didn't find none."

At such a naïve remark, the girl slightly shuddered.

"What do *you* think?" She looked anxiously upon the Reverend Jamison.

"I should say, that these evidently are cliff-dwelling ruins," he delivered.

"Gee! I've heard of them," informed William Jones. "I've sold picture postals of 'em to tourists."

The girl knitted her brows, puzzled. Her eyes sought those of the Reverend Jamison's—and their depths were to him remarkable. She laughed frankly.

"Yes?" she murmured; and confessed: "William knows more than I do, then, I'm afraid."

"They're a thousand years old," delivered William glibly. "People are all dead that lived in 'em. Three for a dime, or twenty-five cents a set."

"Is he telling the truth? Would they be a thousand years old?" referred the girl.

The Reverend Jamison judicially a-hemmed.

"Nobody knows. Five hundred or a thousand. Very old, at all events, and long uninhabited."

"What's the matter with us eatin'?" demanded William. "Ain't you folks hungry?"

"But it isn't fit to eat, is it?" exclaimed the girl. "If it's been here all this time!"

She fingered the bacon gingerly.

"Oh, say!" grinned William. "You don't suppose——"

The Reverend Jamison plucked him by the sleeve, impelling him away.

"Let's see what else we can find, William. Show me the other rooms."

William obeyed, in part; but beyond the partition wall he stopped short. His protest must out.

"Say," he exposulated. "She don't think that stuff's no thousand years old, does she? Gee!"

"We'll let her think what she pleases, William," instructed the Reverend Jamison meaningly.

"Know what *I* think?" invited William. He lowered his tone confidentially. "This here's a bandits' roost, I bet you! See what more I found? All about 'em!" and he displayed a ragged, soiled remnant of dime-novel literature. "It was in with the victuals."

"But you mustn't alarm her, William," cautioned the Reverend Jamison.

"Sure not," engaged William.

"Whoo-ee?" she called musically.

"Whoo-ee," answered William prompt, and not at all backward.

They returned through the passage.

"I believe it *is* fit to eat, some of it," declared the girl, nonplused but joyously, with sleeves rolled up. "Do you think it can be very old?"

"In this dry climate things keep indefinitely," assured the Reverend Jamison.

William winked a roguish eye at him.

"If we only had a skillet I'd cook some bacon," she murmured, tentatively glancing about her.

"There's one up the chimley of the fireplace in that corner. I fished it out and put it back again," announced William, the ever-ready.

The fireplace was of the Mexican order—a cone or beehive, built into a corner and bisected vertically; therefore a half a cone or beehive, the top closed to almost a short funnel, as a guide to the smoke and an encouragement to draft.

Kneeling before this fireplace of stones and clay, William thrust up his arm and produced a small skillet.

The girl examined the skillet as dubiously as she had been surveying the fireplace. She proceeded to polish it vigorously with a bit of paper.

"I must have some wood, mustn't I?" she directed.

"The Reverend and me'll get you some," quoth William. "I know where; in those other rooms. Say," he addressed, in the adjacent room beyond, stopping short, as if struck by a sudden thought. "You needn't come. I can

carry it all. Stay with her, if you want to. Ain't she a beaut, tho'?"

The Reverend Jamison hastened to set the situation aright before such an alarmingly perspicacious young man.

"William," he addressed impressively, "that is Miss Morgan. She is upon her way to be married—to a very dear friend of mine. In fact, I am to officiate at the ceremony. We must take good care of her and get her through to him safely and speedily."

"Sure," agreed William.

"No doubt he's exceedingly anxious about her," continued the Reverend Jamison, determined to put matters on record; for William, of course; for William. He himself needed no reminder —did he? "And we must send word to him of her safety and whereabouts, at the earliest possible instant."

"I should say," agreed William. "She's a peacherino, all right. There's no show for you there, then; is there?"

"You mustn't even think of such a thing," reproved the Reverend Jamison severely. "I am a clergyman. Why, I am to officiate at her wedding to my friend. I am surprised, William."

"Let's get that wood or she'll pull our hair," prompted William, unabashed. "I'm hungry; ain't you?"

There was another room beyond this. By the caved-in ceilings was revealed the existence of upper stories; and the farther room seemed to extend upward into a rounded tower, quite intact, but with the approach crumbled away. Below, as ever, and before, lay the mighty gulch or cañon.

The caved-in ceilings exposed splintered girders of cedar, and aspen poles, and bark thatch, and the floors were somewhat littered.

"I'm goin' up in there some time," announced William, eying the tower. "Bet you I can."

"Is this the wood?" asked his companion, ignoring the opportunity to wager.

"Sure. Pick it up, or bust it off," said William, suiting action to word.

They bore back each his armful of the dry, brittle fuel. The girl, who evidently had been gazing out of a window, turned and faced them with a smile, but with dewy lashes. The Reverend Jamison's heart ached for her. He felt moved to proffer some morsel of voiced sympathy; but he could only dump his armful as did William his.

Out of all the matches extracted from damp pockets, one was found sufficiently alive to ignite. The wood, piled in the fireplace, burned easily; the girl's dubious look, as she waited results, vanished. The smoke ascended through the tip of the half cone and was dissipated along the ceiling; just as had been originally intended.

So she sat even merrily before the blaze and prepared the bacon.

"I *could* make *bread*," she hazarded, "but I don't believe I'll try it. I found some baking powder."

"Certainly not," declared the Reverend Jamison, amazed at the idea. "The bacon will be a great plenty."

"That sizzlin' sounds good, don't she?" commented William, squatting and greedy.

It all might have been but an impromptu outing for three. Only after the bacon had been eaten and while William was scouring the skillet, did the false gayety and the truth show through.

The girl gazed again out of the window; the Reverend Jamison gazed out of the other window. There was a moment of silence. The sun was low, and slightly behind, flooding the cañon but sending long shadows obliquely athwart its slopes. Birds were chirping and calling, evening was near. 'Twas the lonesome hour, when everything that had a home was thinking of it. The bare room in the cave ruins waxed, on the instant, the more forlorn. The girl turned impulsively. Almost she broke down.

"Oh, aren't we *ever* to get out of here?" she appealed despairingly. "What is to become of us—and what has become of the others!"

The Reverend Jamison stood helpless.

"I very much fear that we must stay here until morning, at least," he said. "That is the safest plan. It is unfor-

tunate; but we ought not to be caught down in the cañon in the dark. It—it might rain; there may be wild beasts. If we were sure of finding a way out, near at hand, before night came on——"

"There ain't any way out for a mile an' more," asserted William. "I was down that far, myself."

"Yes." She accepted the dictum. "I suppose we had better stay here, until morning. But if I only could get *word* out, or receive word!" She choked, and turned to her window once more.

Again the Reverend Jamison's training and experience failed to supply him with phrase of comfort in the emergency. He could only murmur fatuously:

"I know. We'll do what we can, all of us, the first thing in the morning."

He would like to have added, or incorporated, "My dear," "My dear girl," or other expression of pastoral sympathy quite proper with his calling and his prospective relations to Dick and herself. But he held himself circumspectly. The great inclination welling within him to take her right in his arms and pledge his very life to bring her out safely he decisively sat upon, as clergyman and as man, he sat upon it, hard. But as human being, he occasionally fain would give it breathing space.

"Somebody's coming!" from her window exclaimed the girl.

III.

"Where? Lemme see." William recklessly dropped the skillet and scurried around the partition wall into the adjoining room, beyond, whose crumbled front would afford view unobstructed.

"Where?" he demanded again.

"In the cañon, William."

The sun was low, and obliquely behind. The vasty gulch lay basking in the last rays of its day. Far down and upon either hand it extended, lined with sage and gravel, silver gray and thrush brown, but its bottom indicated by a narrow seam of contrasty emerald—the willows and brush of the erstwhile stream bed.

This seam ended abruptly; pinched out, like a vein, midway down the course of the cañon. And below the terminal point was a moving speck, coming on.

The sun was at best to reveal it; but for all that, the girl had good eyes to pick it out, amidst such space. The Reverend Jamison for a minute strained his sight in vain.

William outrivaled him.

"I see him!" cried William. "He's a-horseback. Let's holler and wave, shall we?"

"Not yet. Wait."

"I bet he's comin' here, anyway," declared William, along the narrow ledge which skirted the ruin, before. "See him, Reverend?"

"Yes, I do. At least, I think I do," the "Reverend" responded cautiously. Just as he believed that he had located a moving object it disappeared into the seam of green.

Marooned watchers, uncertain of the sail which they had espied, the three gazed expectantly until, right beneath them, from the seam of green emerged the figure, and began, now afoot, the steep ascent of the hither slope.

"There he is!" shouted William, excited.

In another minute the climber had passed out of the line of their vision, which was cut by the ledge. William craned dangerously, to no satisfactory result; and averring: "He's the fellow who owns this place, I bet! He's comin' up here, too!" darted through the room wherein were his two companions, dived into the hole which formed the doorway, and was gone, evidently to meet the arrival.

There was an interval of suspense. The girl looked wide-eyed upon the Reverend Jamison, who, with a little thrill of apprehension, foresaw his responsibilities increasing.

A sudden shrill expostulation arose without, in the voice of William.

"Look out, will you? Don't you shoot *me!* I ain't done nothin'!"

Taking quick, involuntary step the

girl grasped the Reverend Jamison by the sleeve. Her fingers thrust something into his palm.

"Hide it, please," she bade swiftly.

'Twas the solitaire ring which had sparkled upon her engagement finger—a valuable ring, in itself, and doubly valuable, of course, because Dick had given it to her. The Reverend Jamison instantly stowed it, a sacred trust, warm and pleasant from her wearing, in a pocket.

Side by side they stood, listening. He heard her nervous breathing.

"Shut up." The command, in response to William's protest, was curt and low, and masterful.

"There ain't nobody in there except a girl and a parson. Honest, there ain't," pleaded William. He continued to whine.

A slight scraping sounded at the doorway hole; and in through was thrust, as if impelled by a force behind, the red, sulky face, and the unwilling body of William.

"Let go of me," scolded William. "What you afraid of?"

The force behind was apparent now, physically, in a dark, grim face and searching black eyes, on the one side of William, and an automatic pistol—itself, however, not behind, but slightly in advance—at the other side.

With William now through and within, upon the threshold the force behind stayed its onward progress, to reconnoitre. Then it resumed its advance, using William as a shield, until, completely entered, freeing William with a little shove, it straightened, to reveal itself a man.

"There; didn't I tell you!" accused William, shaking himself into his collar again, and indignantly readjusting his cap to its rakish angle.

Poised for danger in ambush, eyes sweeping around the room and back, pistol alertly held, the man stood, a moment; until reassured, with change of mien he doffed his wide-brimmed black hat, to bow low and ceremoniously.

"Señor and señorita." The address and the smile each had a tinge of good-humored mockery. *"La casa es suya."*

A spectacular, dashing type of man he was—lithe and erect; six feet, perhaps; bronze-skinned, black-eyed, with crisp black mustache, square chin, high cheek bones, frank and burning gaze; coatless, but not vestless; red 'kerchief knotted loosely at the open throat of blue flannel shirt; trousers in mountain boots laced well up—cream-colored boots they, somewhat soiled; slim-ankled, slim-waisted, broad-shouldered.

"I beg your pardon," hazarded the Reverend Jamison.

"Aw, he can speak English. He spoke it to me," scoffed William, who had about recovered his natural aplomb.

The man smiled, his thin lips curving indulgently.

"I said in Mexican, 'The house is yours'—*'La casa es suya'*—a current phrase in this country."

"We are sorry that we have been obliged to intrude upon you, sir," and the Reverend Jamison stiffened lest in the welcome was a covert sarcasm.

The man slipped his pistol out of sight, and replaced his hat.

"I'm not," he said easily, his glance playing without reserve over the girl.

She blushed, and was vexed at so doing. But the glance had made his reply impertinent. Yet, she realized, it might be only Western frankness.

He leaned negligently, but with grace studied or unstudied, against the wall, and as negligently rolled a cigarette between thumb and forefinger.

"With your permission—or, as the Mexicans say, *'Con su licencia,'*" he proffered.

William, sidling near, with honest admiration, accepted pouch and paper, and, also rolling a cigarette, leaned there closely copying the attitude.

"Tourists?" The man, lazily inhaling and exhaling, invited explanation—to which, possibly, he had a right.

"Not exactly," replied the Reverend Jamison. "We were going through on the train, and a terrific storm of wind and rain washed us into this cañon. We found these ruins by mere accident."

"I see," the man meditatively eyed them, and most he scanned the girl.

"Is there a town near here?" she asked.

"Fifteen miles down and over."

She flushed eagerly.

"Can you take us to it? Has it a telegraph office? Oh, I wish we had known!"

"We are very anxious to get word out, at least. This young lady is on her way to be married, and I am the officiating clergyman," further explained the Reverend Jamison.

"*Si,*" nodded the man, still meditative.

"Can you take us to town, or show us the way there?"

"No. The trail is washed out too bad. You'll have to wait a day or two till it's fixed. Maybe I could get word in for you, by a short cut. In the meantime, as I said, *'la casa es suya'*—the house is yours."

"Oh!" murmured the girl, aghast.

The man smiled gently, and also quizzically.

"It used to be quite a house," he defended.

"How did *you* come?" queried the Reverend Jamison.

"I? I didn't come from town. I'm range rider through here; these ruins are one of my camps."

"What did you want to shoot us for?" demanded William.

The man laughed lazily, and flicked his cigarette stub away.

"That was all a mistake, son. You might have been somebody else—but you weren't. Only, I had to find out."

"What cañon is this?" pursued the Reverend Jamison.

"Paradise." The man suddenly flashed into animation. "Why? Doesn't it look like it? You're a sky pilot; you ought to know."

"This here, Paradise?" snorted William. "Aw, what you givin' us?"

"It sure is Paradise, now, all right," retorted the man—with a swift glance at the girl; "if it wasn't before. I reckon it was named for the snakes, though, the beginning."

"Snakes!" cried the girl.

He surveyed her.

"Yes," he said. "The cañon's plumb full of rattlers, and that's another reason you can't get out without a guide and horses. See my boots, where they've struck them."

"Well," quoth the Reverend Jamison, with shrug and smile, to calm her distress, "we're glad to accept your hospitality, then. This is Miss Morgan, I am the Reverend Jamison Daniels of Severndale, Massachusetts; that is William Jones, the train boy. If we must stay here we will make the best of it, and rely upon you to get word out, and us out, too, at the earliest opportunity. Is there enough to eat, I wonder?"

"We found your pantry," supplemented the girl, in mischievous confession.

"Not all of it," the man answered. "There's stuff cached all around here. Are you hungry?"

The girl nodded, eyes smiling, but face demure.

"We had to eat my own cooking," she pleaded.

"What did you find to cook?"

"Bacon. I didn't try bread."

"She thought the bacon was a thousand years old," giggled William.

"Hush!" she reproved, with mock severity.

"It didn't taste like it. It was first class," praised the Reverend Jamison.

She dropped him a curtsy. For now she was apparently blithe again, adapting herself to the circumstances. Dick was to have a wonderful wife, decided the Reverend Jamison, anew.

"If you can stand a change of cooks I'll see what I can do," remarked their host. "Never let my guests work—when I have any."

"I'll fetch you wood," volunteered the glad William.

Night, velvety, eerie, chill, settled down upon the cañon, enfolding its depths; but within the ancient ruin, high up in the cañon wall, before the blazing fire, which from its corner dispensed light and warmth, the castaways and their host sat in half circle, comfortable, if not entirely content.

Their host was proving a ready and entertaining talker. Handsome, virile,

Western, picturesque, he had William hanging upon his every word and movement in the grip of perfect fascination. And in that Rembrandt ruddy atmosphere of high lights and shadows, the minister, gazing across and listening, found himself likewise fascinated.

With finished insouciance the man spoke much of himself—and of the ruins which besprinkled the cañons; the girl questioned naïvely, the fire-shine glimmered in her hair and eyes, and along her red lips. Gradually the conversation was limited practically to those two. A goodly pair they were; the old room never had seen a better. And the Reverend Jamison's heart was troubled. It could not be that her interest was beyond the casual; no. She was Dick's; Dick's alone. And on Dick's account—precisely on Dick's account—she must be brought out safe and true.

About this man, their host, was something that did not ring true. Studying him across the fire-shine, the minister sensed it, and was troubled.

IV.

The sun was shining across the crumbled wall, into the outer room, when the Reverend Jamison awoke, confused and stiff, to blink about him. Near, William was snoring, the sun upon his face, but the man, their host, was gone; his blankets were empty. The Reverend Jamison sat up in alarm.

However, there was a scramble and a quick step, and the man arrived. He carried by their legs three grouse, and by its tail, a rattlesnake.

The lids of William Jones, drowsily ajar, opened wide in wonder.

"Did you kill them with your pistol?" he demanded, lunging to his feet.

"You bet," assured the man brusquely. "Shot the heads off them all—see?" He flung the snake down, but retained the birds. "How is the lady? We'll have to go in there to cook breakfast."

The girl's voice responded for herself.

"Very well, indeed, thank you." Her face, bonny and smiling, appeared framed in the low doorway. "What did I hear about breakfast?"

"Chickens and rattlesnakes!" vociferated William. "He went out and shot 'em with his pistol."

With a little exclamation the face vanished.

"Can we come in?" asked the Reverend Jamison.

"All but the snake," she replied. "We don't have to eat that, do we?"

"Some people have eaten snakes and been glad enough to get them," said the man, as he headed the file, entering. "Meat's apt to be meat, when you want it bad. But we've got plenty. That fellow was crawling in the sun when I came up with the grouse, so I killed him. Six rattles."

He busied himself making a fire in the fireplace. The Reverend Jamison surveyed the girl, with anxious query.

"How did you sleep?"

"I didn't stay awake to find out, sir," she announced quickly.

The smile accompanying the words was quite assurance sufficient, and with that tingling in his heart he retired rearward, to wash.

"Come on," quoth William eagerly to her. "I'll show you the snake he killed. There are the chickens—see? Shot 'em all with his pistol right in the head! Gee, he's a good shot, ain't he!"

"You might take those birds outside and clean them, while you're at it, Bill," directed the man.

"The poor things!" murmured the girl, following William through the doorway. And without, she presently was shuddering, with those horrified shudders in which femininity is apt to delight, over the reptile.

When she and William returned, the Reverend Jamison had completed his toilet. The man, their host, glanced up as he professionally gathered the coals of the fireplace into a heap for the broiling.

"Think you'll like grouse better than bacon?" he remarked.

She nodded.

"This is awfully jolly," she answered. "If only——"

"If only it was voluntary, eh?"

"But you'll have good word for us to-day, and we'll send out good word," hastened to supplement the Reverend Jamison. "You're going into town, I understand."

"I'll try it. Can't say how far I'll get, though." His tone was curt.

In the curtness, that abrupt change when man addressed man, the Reverend Jamison read, he thought, hostility, and again that subtle undercurrent of menace in the atmosphere around-about insinuated among his tense, overwrought nerves.

The girl's voice broke the brief interval.

"Well—it's a beautiful day. That is certain, at least," she proffered, from the window out of which she was gazing.

Their host, squatting upon his heels before the fire, viewed her trim figure with calm, considering approval.

"Yes," he drawled. "Every day is a fine day in this country. If you'll notice you'll see that all these cliff ruins front the east, when they can, so as to catch the rising sun."

"Look," she bade to the Reverend Jamison.

She stood slightly aside, inviting him to her window.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she breathed. "So fresh and peaceful."

Her soft shoulder brushed his as together they gazed. The ineffable ether of her personality enveloped him, strangely stirred him, strangely appealed. As they turned back to the room and fire, his glance crossed that of their host—which, with a sudden hard narrowing of the pupils, almost feline in its phase, instantly shifted to the sizzling birds.

'Twas William Jones who produced the only pencil in the party, and the Reverend Jamison gravely handed it and a bit of soiled wrapping paper to the girl, for the writing of the message.

"Dick will want to hear from you rather than me," he suggested—and at the thought of that message reaching Dick, good old Dick, a prompt sensation of thankfulness and of envy welled within him. Lucky Dick!

The girl flushed painfully.

"But—what shall I say?" she faltered.

Surely she loved Dick; surely she loved him; this confusion arose, then, from natural maiden modesty, from surcharged feelings, from uncertainty what wording to choose that would express much, and yet, at the same time, be properly couched for stranger eyes to read.

She wrote nervously. With a little sigh of relief and a half smile at the Reverend Jamison, she passed the paper to the man. He nodded, and carelessly tucked it into a vest pocket.

"I said that we three were safe," she volunteered—and volunteered no further.

The Reverend Jamison stifled the hurt at her reticence. She was acting within her rights. And he addressed the man, their host.

"If you will have that sent we will pay you what it costs, of course; or you can have it sent collect. Or, if you prefer, I will give you money enough now, to cover it."

The man turned impatiently, to make exit.

"Better wait till I've been there," he grunted. And he descended the stairway niches.

Watching at the edge, presently they witnessed him upon the slope below, plowing down to the bottom of the cañon. He entered the seam of green, and when he emerged at the terminal he was horseback.

"He waved!" exclaimed William, and instantly the girl's handkerchief flashed response. The Reverend Jamison, helpless in this byplay of those who had sharper eyes than he, and conscious of his deficiency, set his lips tightly—ashamed as he was of so doing. But he was answerable for her, to Dick—was he not? She was Dick's, and he was Dick's friend. This man, black-eyed, high-cheeked, both brusque and debonair, this undeterminable personage of a wild cañon, must not think himself encouraged to presume. Con-

found him, what did he mean by waving, anyhow? And the Reverend Jamison found himself, with a sort of titillating anger, setting his secular jaw.

The girl turned, with another little sigh.

"I wonder when he will be back?" she said.

"Not till evening, I'm afraid. The longer he is gone, the better the chance that he has got through, you know."

"Yes?" Her voice was tentative, dubious. The Reverend Jamison rallied to reassure her.

"About noon we can be thinking of the welcome message speeding on to Dick," he reminded. "That is the main thing."

"That—and to know that nobody on the train was killed," she quavered, with sudden emotion.

"Certainly."

"Let's explore," proposed William, alert and restless.

"Not down below," she protested; "where the snakes are!"

"Naw. Up here. Let's look for skeletons and treasure."

They followed William through the rooms, loitering as they chose, now examining the recesses in the crumbling walls, now pausing for a vista of the eternal cañon beneath. But neither skeletons nor hidden hoard did they discover. The only bones, a few slender, brittle fragments of small animals —the turkey of the ancients, had they but realized—the only tokens of treasure a few inconsequential bits of figured pottery and the print of a baby hand in some clay smeared along a window casing.

"Where do you suppose they went to?" queried the girl, at last, seating herself in an embrasure niche, over the simmering cañon.

"Who?"

"These people whose home we are occupying."

"Nobody knows, I believe."

"They must have been happy," she mused. "They must have been happier than we who live shut in, in cities. It seems to me a shame that the world to most of us is only streets and buildings and other people, when there is so much else, outside. I think," she added frankly, "that I must have been a cave woman once. Maybe I lived in these very rooms."

"Do they look familiar?"

"No." She laughed. "Except that the general location appeals. Were other things adjusted I could live here very contentedly—with plenty of embroidery."

"And with Dick," he hazarded zealously. "We'll have to make Dick a—er, ranger, or something."

Her brows lifted archly.

"From what I know of Dick, he is distinctly urban."

And she? As she sat there, lightly perched upon the ruined wall between cañon depth and azure dome, the cool breeze stirring her hair, the sunshine glinting upon its masses, clear-eyed, red blood glowing through her cheeks, lips just parted, she might well have been the feminine spirit of the wilderness, perfect complement to some lithe free treader of the open way.

The Reverend Jamison, a little troubled over the situation—but, of course, she *loved* Dick—nevertheless, drew through his nostrils a new breath. Despite Dick, despite the wreck, despite Massachusetts and Puritan ancestry, to be here was good. Almost could *he* renounce the world afar, and be a cave dweller with a mate such as she. In fact, quite so. The realization shocked him—but he let it shock.

"Let's eat," interrupted William, breaking in upon them. "It's afternoon. See the sun?"

"Let's," concurred the girl, springing up. "What shall we have?"

The Reverend Jamison slowly arose. He looked at his useless watch—such is the force of habit—which had refused to run, although diligently wound and frequently shaken.

"A sabre-tooth tiger, or a mastodon steak would be appropriate," he ventured whimsically. "Otherwise, it must be the remains from this morning's breakfast—cold bread and bacon and water. William finished the fowl, as I remember."

They lunched. The day wore away, and again the sun was behind them, beginning to cast the long shadows obliquely through the cañon. It was time—perhaps—for their messenger to be returning, and they scanned the way below by which he should appear. Then, during an interval when they were scanning not, again they heard the scrambling sound without.

"It's him!" cried William, jubilant, darting forward to the doorway hole. And recoiled.

For in through the doorway hole protruded an oval, dusky visage, peering anxiously out of large, dark eyes. The face smiled, showing flashing white teeth. The whole figure behind the face entered. 'Twas a Mexican woman, a shawl over her head.

"*Bueno.* How-do-do?" she said.

The momentary grasp of the girl's hand upon the Reverend Jamison's arm relaxed.

"How do you do?" she answered.

"'Tain't him, after all," announced William, superfluously astonished.

The woman peered keenly around.

"*Bueno,*" she repeated, in the succinct greeting of her race. "Where heem?" She continued her furtive, constant scrutiny, now of the countenances, now of the room.

"Who?" The Reverend Jamison asked.

"Heem." She shuffled quickly to the rear of the room, and was gone, around the partitioning wall, as if searching the rooms beyond.

"What's the matter with her, anyhow?" scolded William, his mouth closed only for the purpose of articulation. "Loony, ain't she?"

"No; she is looking for some one."

The woman was back again. The shawl had dropped from her head around her shoulders. She was comely.

"Heem no here?" she demanded.

"But my good woman, whom do you want?" invited the Reverend Jamison.

"Heem," she insisted. "Muy man—*hombre.*"

"She must mean her husband," suggested the girl doubtfully.

"What kind of lookin' man?" queried William. "Black eyes and black mustache?"

"*Si.* Black—negro, muy negro. Nice look. Muy *hombre.*"

"Aw, you mean that range rider. He ain't here. He's gone. He was here last night, but he's gone. He'll be back pretty soon."

"Last night? You here, too?"

William nodded comprehensively.

"Sure. He cooked supper and breakfast for us."

The woman's gaze flashed from face to face, and lingered longest upon the girl's. Her eyes blazed.

"She here?"

"I?" The girl smiled friendly. "Yes, I was here. He has been very kind to us. Now he has gone into town, to take a message."

The woman fumbled in the bosom of her waist.

"Dees man?"

She vehemently held out a slip of paper. It was a newspaper clipping, including a picture and description, and the offer of a reward for a desperado.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the Reverend Jamison, the secular in him again in the ascendant. He glanced at the girl anxiously. Would it be a violent shock to her? Why, the fellow was a common robber, evidently. And the Reverend Jamison was glad of it! Ay, glad of it; the charity attached to his cloth wavered. He was glad of it, on—on Dick's account.

"Oh!" murmured the girl. She flushed crimson, and shrank. "But we thought he was a range rider, didn't we? He said so."

William swelled and pirouetted.

"Aw, I knew he was a bandit," he proclaimed, joyous. "Gee! Didn't I say this was a bandit's roost? Ain't that swell? Regular robber. First robber I ever saw. I bet you he's a chief, too. Let's all join his band. I'm goin' to. Wish he'd come back. I ain't goin' to be no train butcher any more. Wish I had a pistol. Wish I could roll a cigarette like he does, with one hand. Him and me'll hold you all for ransom, if you don't join us."

Stung by the girl's flush, and satis-

fied to interpret that alone, the woman loosed that jealous fury tentatively kept in leash. She stormed before them; her face scintillated beauty and rage.

"*Perro gringo*—white dog!" she berated. "I catch heem. He say he lov' me. Now I find *you* here, you Americana. For dees, he shall die. Ef shereef will come an' shereef's men to dees hiding spot, an' take heem away an' heng heem. *Por Dios!*"

"Oh, hush!" implored the girl. "He will be back soon. It is all right. He is only helping us. We were wrecked and he has gone with a message."

"Where he gone?"

"Into town; with a message to be telegraphed."

"When?"

"This morning, early."

The woman laughed scornfully.

"You beleef?" she taunted.

"Certainly. We would have gone, too; only the trail is too badly washed."

The woman laughed again, and spoke with renewed vehemence.

"He lie. Trail bad, you say? Trail good; *bueno, bueno, bueno;* I come ofer eet. I come from town, *el pueblo,* but I no meet heem. He lie."

"What's that?" The Reverend Jamison spoke sharply. "Did you come out from town, by that trail?"

"*Si,* señor."

"But maybe there are two trails," ventured the girl.

"One. One trail," declared the woman. "I come by eet. I no see heem in town, I no meet heem. He cannot go to *el pueblo.* He 'fraid of Señor Shereef."

"But why did he tell us what he did, then?" gasped the girl.

The woman carelessly readjusted the shawl upon her shapely shoulders. Her lip curled.

"He lie. He keep you here," she said.

"We must leave at once, then," decreed the Reverend Jamison. He spoke to the woman. "Will you guide us to town?"

"Aren't you afeared of the snakes?" reminded William. "They'll bite you."

"Snake? Bah!" spat the woman. "He worse snake. No snake on trail. One, mebbe."

"Let's go," pleaded the girl breathlessly.

"Naw," whined William. "You're our prisoners, for ransom." His face brightened. "You can't go. He's comin'. I hear him. I'm goin' to tell him I'll be a bandit, too."

But William's action was deferred, for a moment, at least. As he turned to dive through the doorway hole, the Reverend Jamison's hand outsprang instantaneously with the movement, and gripped him by the shirt collar.

A scramble on the landing without announced an arrival.

V.

The man entered. Sensitive as any other hunted animal to the inimical, even in the instant of straightening from his stooping posture, he must have realized the unfriendly atmosphere. But he doffed his hat with all his exaggerated gallantry.

"How," he said briefly.

He glanced from one to another. The Mexican woman, with dramatic pose, gazed upon him scornfully. His eyes returned to her, and his tongue addressed her with a single curt phrase that seemed to stab her like a knife and wilt her.

Slightly travel-stained he was, and all alert. His eyes rested last upon the girl. They questioned her.

"Don't hurt us," blurted the nervous and ready William. "I'll join your band. We'll hold 'em for ransom."

The Reverend Jamison thrust him behind with a vigor that left him too indignant for immediate further utterance.

"This article is about you, I judge," accused the Reverend Jamison.

The man bowed, in cool mockery. His eyes had already taken it in.

"*Gratias, padre,*" he acknowledged.

"*Perro gringo!*" muttered the Mexican woman, out of her steady glare resumed.

"We'll all be bandits!" babbled the eager William.

"Don't, William," pleaded the girl.

"And have you been into town?"

"I have."

"He lie," spoke the Mexican woman. "He 'fraid of shereef."

The man ignored her fling.

"I sent your wire," he said bluntly to the girl.

"Oh, did you! Thanks," she answered gratefully. She hesitated. "Did you pay for it?"

"No. I persuaded the operator to forward it, collect." There was a certain grim significance in his tone. He continued: "As far as I could learn, nobody else is missing. You three is all. The train's been checked up complete."

"Thank God!" quoth the Reverend Jamison.

The girl echoed the words.

"He lie. He no go in," flung the Mexican woman vengefully.

"*Did* you go in? Really?" appealed the girl.

The man's soul suddenly rose into his hard eyes, and softened them.

"I surely did," he said. "Ask my hawss."

"But you must have risked something."

"Only my life," he smiled.

"But——" She expostulated, aghast. "We did not want you to do that," she added gently. "We did not know."

"We know now," put in the Reverend Jamison. "If this clipping is the truth—and he doesn't deny it—there is only one thing for us; we must leave you, sir."

"Aw, naw!" William squirmed to the front. "Naw! They can't leave till they've paid ransom—can they, cap! They'll have to pay us five million dollars—or somethin'."

The man smiled inscrutably.

"More than that, Bill."

"I t'ink I hear the shereef," remarked the Mexican woman insolently.

The man's face darkened, and at his sharp burst of Spanish she cringed.

"Will you let us pass, sir?" demanded the Reverend Jamison.

The other did not move, but insolent now, in his turn, stood there before the doorway.

"I have no objection to *your* passing," he sneered. "In fact, a little walk along the trail below may be the best thing for you. Sorry I can't lend you a hawss, but mine's pretty tired. You can take the Mexican, though. I'll *give* you *her*."

The Reverend Jamison stiffened.

"You wouldn't intimate that I go and leave these—these others, sir?"

"Well, you can have Bill, too. I ain't runnin' a kindergarten."

"You villainous scoundrel!" The Reverend Jamison's thoroughly secular jaw set hard.

"Go on, Mr. Daniels." The girl's face was bloodless, but she spoke clearly. "Go on and get help. I'm not afraid. William and I will wait."

"Aw, I'm a bandit, too," whined William.

The man's eyes flickered toward her.

"You'll not be harmed—unless this she-devil of a Mexican harms you. But I want you. Listen. I'm not so bad. Look at me. You're cut out for a better man than this sky pilot or that fellow you sent the wire to. I need you. There's other girls for them; there ain't, for me. Not your kind. This Mexican piece—she ain't your kind, or mine neither. I've been used—once—to better. I won't keep you in a cave. I've got stuff enough cached away to take us around the world, and then some—and there's always more. What do you say? Chuck this sky pilot and that other fellow, and follow me."

"Oh, no!" gasped the girl.

"You infernal scoundrel!" The Reverend Jamison Daniels took an impulsive step forward—and stopped short. "Why can't you use your fists, or let us pass?" he challenged savagely.

"Don't shoot his head off," implored William. "We'll hold 'em for ransom."

"Go on and pass," invited the desperado, partially uncovering the exit—his pistol nevertheless held ready. "I don't want *you*."

"I don't go unless Miss Morgan goes with me, of course."

"You go if I say so. But maybe you'd better stay a while. We may want to use you professionally."

There was a hissed exclamation in Spanish from the Mexican woman, a smothered shriek from the girl. The man abruptly dodged; a knife quivered in an interstice of the wall behind him. Seizing the opportunity, with an impetuous movement, the Reverend Jamison hurled himself forward. They locked.

"Fight! Fight! Who shall I help?" yelped William, wildly dancing about.

The Reverend Jamison strained and braced.

"Quick! Run past," he panted. "I'll follow."

But even while he spoke, in the moment of his ascendancy, the strength of the figure which he held forced against the wall swelled irresistibly. The Reverend Jamison's life had been urban; his major exercise golf. Like a bent bow the form within his arms gathered power, and in a sudden revulsion and a curse, tore loose, thrusting him violently backward.

Staggering, breathless, the Reverend Jamison was conscious that the Mexican woman had darted forward, and that the desperado was wresting from her the regained knife.

"Past—now——!" he bade.

"The tower!" proposed the girl, quicker-witted. She turned and swiftly ran around the partitioning wall, into the rooms beyond. He followed.

Traversing, they halted at the terminus of the ruins where what appeared to have been a tower structure extended upward its shattered remains, in a corner of the rock platform.

The girl already was clambering hastily and somewhat fruitlessly among the fragments, trying to scale the tower wall inside. Above, the second floor had caved in, and across the opening fringed with shredded cedar bark of the long ago, and with other broken thatch, extended one of the girder beams. Swinging aloft, the Reverend Jamison drew himself upon the beam, and thence reached down.

"Here," he urged.

She took his hand. By sheer determination, as much as by sheer strength, he hoisted her; her foot found lodgment in a crevice, and thus aided, he hauled her upward.

"Who is that!" she gasped, affrighted, as in midair she clutched at the girder.

"It's me," informed the voice of William. "Hurry up. I'm comin' there, too."

A vigorous boost from William below, and she was safely atop the beam. Not needing the Reverend Jamison's steadying arm she crossed to the floor. Dexterously chinning himself up, came William, and the three were together in this, the second story of the ancient tower structure.

"He's comin', next, I bet," quoth William. "Hear him?"

Yes, they had found refuge none too soon—refuge such as it was. Rapid footsteps approached, and the Reverend Jamison nerved himself. The girl's hand upon his arm tightened.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You're safe." He removed his coat—his clerical coat—removed it impatiently, and casting it aside, removed, likewise, his vest. In this crisis they were non-essentials.

The steps were now in the room itself, below. They paused, as if the arrival was scanning about. With the girl's hand pressing his arm in spasmodic appeal, the Reverend Jamison tried to hold his breath. He fancied that he could hear the tumultuous beating of her heart.

The man below muttered a curse, and William blithely hailed:

"I got 'em up here, cap. What we goin' to do—double their ransom?"

At this shameless betrayal the girl murmured a short, reproachful: "Oh, William!"

"You little wretch!" berated the Reverend Jamison.

"Well, you got to pay ransom," defended William, injured. "That's what they always do."

The man below spoke authoritatively.

"Come down, you. You're as far as you can get."

Nobody answered. He tried again, impatiently.

"What's the matter with yuh! Cut out this monkey business. I know these ruins better than you do, and I know you're as far as you can go. You're up against it. It's a case of back track, for you, or starve. Come down, friends."

No reply. The girl's hand tightened once more upon the Reverend Jamison's sleeve, his own hand gripped ruthlessly William's shoulder. William wriggled. The man below continued:

"I won't hurt you. You'll save yourself a lot of trouble. When you get right hungry and dry you'll come down fast enough then, I bet."

"The sheriff will be here before that, my man," reminded the Reverend Jamison.

"Will he? Seeing, you know, I'd better come right up and settle our little business."

"On peril of your life, sir," warned the Reverend Jamison.

The girl shrank toward him. The man below laughed sneeringly.

"No sky-pilot ever lived who can bluff me," he retorted.

By the sounds he had begun to climb.

"He's comin'," quoth William, awed. "Gee! What you goin' to do?"

The Reverend Jamison leaned forward to peer down over the edge of the hole, and the girl pulled him back.

"No. He might shoot," she said.

A grunt and a curse below, with falling of stone and clay, denoted that the ascent was continuing. The Reverend Jamison glanced desperately about. In a corner lay an oblong, smoothly oval stone; longer than his two fists placed end to end, and somewhat larger in girth. An old implement it was, of the former people—a hammerhead or a smoothing stone for polishing of weapons. The Reverend Jamison, coatless and vestless, seized it. He was nerved like any other animal at bay; he was a cave man defending his cave.

"I give you warning," he cried. "You come at your peril."

The fingers of a hand appeared, grasping the beam which crossed the hole, and the Reverend Jamison smashed viciously down upon them. Amidst an exclamation, they vanished. There was a rattle, a sliding, and a broken thud, mingled with a pistol shot; then through the hole in the floor drifted a thin reek of dust and powder fume.

"Aw, he tumbled and his pistol went off," jeered William, the volatile. "I bet he ain't got any fingers left on one hand, either! Bet he's hurt, too."

"I must go down and see," proffered the Reverend Jamison, panting a little, still clutching his weapon, but suddenly recalled to the charitable duties of his discarded cloth; he made a hasty start for the edge, but the girl stayed him.

"No. Please don't, yet," she pleaded. "Please don't. I need you up here, till we're sure."

The Reverend Jamison suffered himself to be checked; for he realized the double exigencies of the situation. Her touch and voice emphasized sufficiently the fact that where she was he should be also—to keep her safe, for *Dick*. Yes, he must bring her out and to Dick, even if he had to kill. However, in humanity's name, he ought to look into that fall. If the fellow was badly hurt——

But he was not long left figuratively rent betwixt duty to Dick and woman, and duty of his calling—one might say, duty of man and duty of minister, or duty of heart and duty of hand—for he had scarcely caught a groan, muffled below, when a rush of steps succeeded, and an excited volley, in feminine tone, of Spanish.

'Twas the Mexican woman. The man answered her. In his voice was pain, irritation, complaint. The brief conversation was followed by a dragging shuffle—a half-repressed groan or two, as if wrung by exertion—and silence. The twain had gone.

"Oh, he *is* hurt!" ejaculated the girl, listening with wide-open eyes.

"I fear he is." The Reverend Jamison's tone was calm and collected. The reaction had come. Happen now what might, he had got in his blow. A

certain fierce satisfaction thrilled him. The attack had been repulsed. He was victor, even if only temporarily, in defense of his own; that is, of Dick's—he representing Dick. He noted a stain of blood upon the beam where the fingers had momentarily rested, and he winced. It must be excruciating to have fingers smashed like that by a rock.

He laid his stone down.

"Do you think I had better go to them?" he asked, troubled.

"No. Please don't," she reiterated. "They may be pretending. It may be only a scheme."

A voice called, agonized, from below.

"Help, *por Dios,* señor and señorita. The man, he shot. Very so. *El padre* come, queeck."

"Say, *is* cap hurt, on the dead?" queried William, inviting candor, addressing the speaker.

The Mexican woman might not understand the colloquialism employed, but she responded with a moan. The Reverend Jamison again would have peered down, but the girl's touch restrained him.

"It may be a trick," she whispered.

And he paid heed to the possibilities of feminine intuition.

"Come, queeck," besought the woman.

"I'll go," volunteered William briskly.

The Reverend Jamison was stung by shame. He hastily grasped his coat, to don it before visiting a sick bed.

"No. I'll go. It's my place," he declared. "Er—you stay here, William, with Miss Morgan."

"But he might go and see," suggested the girl. Her face, which had been pallid, faintly colored. "Wouldn't that be the better way? They wouldn't hurt William——"

"Naw," agreed William brusquely. "I'm a bandit, now. I'm part of the gang." His leg around the beam, he already was about to descend, in business-like manner. "And it's no fair skippin' off, either, while I ain't here. You got to pay ransom."

With this admonition he swung down through the hole, and in a scramble and a thump, landed upon the floor beneath.

"Hello! Take me to cap," they heard him say.

She objected.

"*El padre,*" she insisted.

"What you givin' us?" reproved William haughtily. "G'wan! I'm one of the crowd, now. I'm a bandit, too. Let's go and see how cap is, and if he's bad hurt I'll tell the Reverend to come. He'll stay up there. He's under ransom, and so's she."

Interpreting his manner, if not his words, the woman, querulously muttering excited phrases, hurried away with him.

The footsteps died. Silence ensued.

"Do you hope he is hurt—badly?" invited the girl.

"If necessary." The Reverend Jamison yielded to this grim candor. "He brought it upon himself."

"You only mashed his fingers."

"I'd have mashed his head just as quick, I'm afraid, if it had come first," he confessed defiantly. "I may have to do it yet."

"If he isn't hurt, you mean."

"Yes." He nervously brushed his coat.

"But how are we to find out the truth, I wonder?"

"William will be back soon. But he's so fascinated with being a bandit—I don't know"—and the Reverend Jamison hesitated, perplexed.

"I don't believe he'd deceive *me,*" she averred slowly, with a flush. "Not if he appreciates what it means."

"We must trust in God," decreed the Reverend Jamison, solemnly surveying his coat.

"And your rock," she added, with a nervous laugh.

"The fellow can try to starve us out, I suppose," he vouchsafed. "But the sheriff will interrupt that process."

"If the sheriff knows."

"Oh, somebody in the town must have seen the man and reported him."

"If he really went into town."

"He said he sent that telegram to Dick, and I rather think he did. Don't

you? Let us hope so, anyway, Miss Morgan."

She lifted her head impulsively. Her countenance crimsoned, but her eyes challenged his.

"Will you be my father confessor? I'm not Edith Morgan."

The Reverend Jamison helplessly let the tails of his coat drag and gather dust again. He stared upon her, bewildered.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered. "But, you know——"

"I should beg yours," she corrected bravely. "It has been my fault. You called me Miss Morgan, right away, because of the hand bag. It is Edith's hand bag, but I'm Frances Fuller, one of Edith's bridesmaids. I was taking the bag into the other car with me, when the accident happened. I don't know, as you can see the situation just as I did—but when you took me for Edith, there in the cañon, it seemed to me that it might be a protection—an engaged girl, on her way to be married, you know; I was frightened and confused, and I seized upon that appeal to chivalry. I was foolish," her voice broke, "for it doesn't appear to have worked out as I intended. But I was sincere—and then, at last, I hated to explain. 'Twas too late."

"Too late!" The Reverend Jamison's pulses leaped. "So you aren't Dick's girl, after all?"

"No." She blushed demurely. "Not Dick's, nor Jack's, nor Tom's, nor anybody's—yet."

"But the telegram went to Dick?"

She laughed.

"Yes; really and truly, that was addressed to Dick, but I signed it Frances. I told him that we two were safe. I was ashamed of the way I treated you, too—I wondered what you would think of my not letting you read what I had written."

"Well, a message from a girl to her fiancé," he reasoned awkwardly. "And a multum in parvo, besides."

"I suppose, now, you will hand me right over," she hazarded, in contrition partly simulated, partly genuine.

"Oh, no! Don't—don't, I beg of you, say any such thing as that," he blurted. "I—I'm a great friend of Dick's. I wanted to keep you safe, for him, of course. Now I——" He floundered for expression. "I only wish that this rock were a little bigger. I haven't even a penknife, otherwise."

He felt haphazard in his pockets, and his fingers encountered the ring. That ring! What was it she had said—that she was not Dick's, nor Jack's, nor Tom's, nor anybody's? But—the ring! He wished that she would say it again, lest he had misunderstood. Time was very short, and he must find out about that ring.

She had moved to the window, which was set like a gun port in the tower wall. Her face was turned, looking out; but beneath the tendrils of hair along her neck, he could see the color flowing and ebbing.

He followed her. Yes, time was short. Should she escape from this room before he had confessed on his part, then he might lose her forever.

"I had determined to keep you safe for Dick," he said. "From the beginning I envied Dick heartily. But you may be sure that my incentive is no less, now." Pshaw, what banality, when moments were precious. "As a gentleman, I can't say what I would—here; first, you were Dick's; next, you are a woman forced to be dependent upon me. But after we both get out, and you are safe and sound, then there'll be a lot I shall want to say."

"If we do both get out," she murmured.

"We shall," he declared. "If I was determined to keep you safe for Dick, confound him, you can understand that now I'll keep you safe for myself."

She glanced askance at him, her eyes brimming.

With sudden masterful rush of feeling he put his arm about her shoulders and pressed her to him.

"Oh, sweetheart," he uttered. "For a time, I was wishing that I were Dick; I had looked for you so long. But now Dick can have his separate entity. I'm satisfied."

Thus they stood, for a minute, gaz-

ing out through the window into the cañon below; stood as perhaps had stood, centuries ago, some other priestly wooer and his maid, met within the sacred walls.

"Paradise Cañon," he said softly. "How little do we know, we human beings, where Paradise may lie!"

"The ring that I gave you," she responded. "It was like the hand bag—not mine. It belongs to one of the other girls——"

"Here," he bade. "You can wear it now, without any pretense. Wear it for a sign—please."

"Hey, what's the matter with you folks?" The raucous yelp of William, and his head sticking above the hole, parted them abruptly. "Didn't you hear me keep tellin' cap's shot right in the stomick? He shot himself with his pistol, when he fell. Come on down. Needn't be afraid."

"Must you go?" she asked anxiously.

The Reverend Jamison was wrestling into his dusty coat.

"I must," he said.

"Then I shall go, too," she asserted simply. Timidly, but with a little air of proprietorship, she brushed his coat shoulder.

The Reverend Jamison picked up the stone, his weapon.

"Take this, and wait a moment," he replied. "I'll go, first."

But scarcely had he slipped to the main floor below, ere she was there also, with him. And thus, side by side, like cave man and cave woman, she clutching fast the ancient stone, he with fists clinched, as if grasping a bludgeon, they followed William, who scurried importantly before.

The man was dying. A physician to the soul could see this as readily as could a physician to the body. By his pallor and weakness he was bleeding internally. He was lying upon a pallet of the blankets in the fireplace room, his head in the lap of the Mexican woman, who was fanning him with a fold of her shawl. He smiled ghastly.

"Here they are, cap," announced William. "How you feelin' now?"

"A little more so, Bill. You've fetched them just in time."

"My man, what can we do for you?" The Reverend Jamison spoke with unaffected compassion. He kneeled down, and took the desperado's hand, to hold it.

The man gazed up at the girl.

"Beg your pardon for the trouble I've put you to," he said. "We all get loco when somebody like you comes 'round—somebody we might have had and didn't. You're a part of what I left behind me, back—home. Dreamed of you—lots. Seemed hard—to find you in flesh—and have to take message into town for other fellow. But I did it. Then lost my nerve. Might have known. You—you never saw me; but I've seen you—heap of times—right here in Paradise Cañon. That's why they called it Par—Paradise, I reckon. Knew you were comin'. Otherwise—Hell, for white man."

"Don't talk much," she begged. "You mustn't." She bent over him; a ministering angel she must have seemed. "Can't we do something for you? I'm—we're so sorry."

He rallied and spoke more curtly.

"I'm all in. Now, if the *padre* will act professionally, a second, I'll pass out, feeling better. Told him we might need him professionally, remember."

"But——!" gasped the girl, with sudden alarm.

The dying man even laughed.

"Not you." His laugh faded into a weary smile. Grimness succeeded, accentuating the rapidly deepening lines from nostrils to mouth. "Don't be scared. I want a rope—put on my woman—and me—*padre*. Think it—will hold?"

"It will hold in the sight of God," responded the Reverend Jamison solemnly. "Does she wish it, too?"

"Do you wish that we be married, *carita?*" queried the man.

The Mexican woman lowered her head.

"*Si*—if the *padre* pleases," she besought. "Oh, *si, si, si.*"

"Your name?" demanded the Rev-

erend Jamison of the man. Moments were waxing precious.

"Black Jack is enough—for this country."

"And hers?"

"Mercedes Gonzales."

"*Si*," murmured the woman.

The brief ceremony was achieved. A shuffle and faint clink were heard without. The woman started apprehensively. She drew the head in her lap closer to her and screened it with her shawl.

"Too late—again," the man muttered, and was lax.

"Come," called the Reverend Jamison, in response to a staccato hammering, as from the butt of a revolver upon the stone lintel outside.

A man, small, blue-eyed, smooth-faced, swiftly entered. After him, upon his heels, another man.

"I'm the sheriff of Bowler County," said the first sharply, gun in hand. "Who are you? Who've you got there?"

William made all haste to explain.

"We ain't bandits," he cried shrilly. "Him and hers engaged and held for ransom, and I'm jus' a train butcher. We ain't bandits."

"Who's in the corner?"

"That," informed the Reverend Jamison Daniels slowly, his arm about his own, "is the widow of the man you wanted. But he has—er"—and the Reverend Jamison cast around for a term which would be succinctly expressive to Western ears—"cashed in."

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

HERE is pretty sage advice from a successful business man:

Don't let anybody tell you that men are the creatures of circumstance; circumstances are the creatures of men. You are the architect of your own fortune. Rely on your own strength of body and soul. Take for your guiding star self-reliance. Inscribe on your banner, "Luck is a fool; pluck is a hero." Don't take too much advice; keep at your helm and steer your own ship, and remember that the great art of commanding is to take a fair share of the work. Think well of yourself, strike out, assume your own position. Drag stones in a wagon over a rough road, and the small ones go to the bottom. Rise above the envious and jealous, fire above the mark you intend to hit. Energy, invincible determination, with a right motive, are the levers that move the world. Don't drink or smoke much; don't swear; don't deceive; don't marry until you can support a wife; be in earnest; be self-reliant; be temperate; be chaste; be generous; be civil; read the papers; advertise your business; make money and do good with it; love your God and fellow men; love truth and virtue; love your country and obey its laws.

WHEN MASCAGNI WAS RECALLED

SIGNOR MASCAGNI, the famous composer, relates how he once obtained employment as a substitute leader of the orchestra in an operetta company for five francs a day, which was not paid regularly. While leading "Satanello" at Naples a song was encored, but he refused to have it repeated. The audience shouted and howled; still Mascagni refused to repeat the song.

Suddenly he was struck in the back by a heavy object and thrown off his chair. "It was a cushion hurled from the gallery," Mascagni says. "I immediately repeated the song, and have never refused an encore since."

WELL! WELL! WELL!
Listen to the Rooters!

IN THE LAND OF FROZEN SUNS.

Gentlemen:—I can't help writing you, I must tell you what I think of your magazine, the POPULAR; it's the best ever. I am English by birth, American by adoption, living at present in Canada; however I am Western by education, and the trueness of your Western stories gets me. We have all read the blood-and-thunder kind, and they none of them catch the spirit of the plains as do the writers in the POPULAR. I have also served in the army in Cuba, and four years in the Philippines, and your army yarns are as true as the rest of the stories. I don't think I've missed a number since you started, excepting in the islands, and then the robbers at headquarters used to steal our copies when they distributed the mails. Can't blame 'em—they knew a good thing when they saw it!

Calgary, Alta. LAND OF FROZEN SUNS.

FILLING THE BILL.

Gentlemen:—I see so many people are writing you letting you know what they think about the POPULAR, that I thought I would take a fling at it. I certainly like that twice-a-month scheme, and think it just about fills the bill. Once a week would be a little too often for me, as I would not read the whole magazine through, and see what I would miss!

Yours truly,

Berlin, Ont. W. H. SIMPSON.

THE HAPPY PAIR.

Gentlemen:—I have been taking your magazine for a long time, and I like it better than any other publication. My husband will sit and read a while, and then laugh. I ask him what he is laughing at and he will say: "Listen!" Then he begins to read me one of the stories in the POPULAR. Your magazine cannot be beaten. There is real life in it—a "git up and go" about it that stirs you. Pick it up and start to read it, and you don't want to let go of it till you have read it all, and then you will wish for the two weeks to go so you can get the next number; and that is the way all the year through.

Chelan, Wash. MRS. W. A. MORGAN.

THE STERLING SET.

Gentlemen:—I have just finished reading the late number of the POPULAR, and take this opportunity to add my voice to the chorus of praise. Your short stories are "there with the goods." Every one of them "rings good," and I feel as though I have lost a jewel if I miss reading one of them. I read *every* story of *every* number, and can truthfully say that since you started your twice-a-month POPULAR your magazine is the only fiction magazine that I read. You have a staff of authors that form what I call "The Sterling Set" of story writers, so named because of the superiority of their work over that of most other writers.

CLARENCE L. TEMPANY.

Walla Walla, Wash.

A CHIP OF THE OLD BLOCK.

Gentlemen:—I thought I would write to you to let you know that the boys enjoy reading your magazine as well as their elders. When I was ten years old my father brought home the POPULAR. From that time on I have not missed a copy. During my two years in a military school in a little town in Pennsylvania I have not failed to get the POPULAR, though I had to send to a large town to get it. My father echoes me in hearty congratulations on your twice-a-month plan.

FREDERICK A. RODEWALD.

New York City, N. Y.

FROM THE MERRY VAUDEVILLE FOLKS.

Gentlemen:—We have been reading your POPULAR MAGAZINE since its first issue, and when it comes to class, well, it is in one by itself. Publishing a magazine is, in a way, similar to our own work. In order to please the public, it is necessary to give them something out of the ordinary; and the grand success that you have achieved with the POPULAR proves that you have held to that rule. Wishing you continued success, we are,

Merrily yours,

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In Vaudeville touring the Orpheum Circuit.

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